Why They Jailed Earl Browder

Turn to Page 15

NEW MASSES

FIFTEEN CENTS

October 31, 1939

The Chamberlain Socialists Whoop the War

by V. J. Jerome

The New York Election —and the Communist Candidates

Amter, Begun, Cacchione, and Crosbie

The Fight for Popular-Priced Books—A Survey

CARTOONS BY GROPPER, RICHTER, CLINTON, JOHNSON

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THE WEATHER
Today: Partly cloudy, little change in temperature
Tomorrow: Increasing cloudiness, rain in afternoon or night, temperature unchanged
Temperatures Yesterday: Max., 66; Min., 53.
Detailed Report on Page 23

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
LATE CITY EDITION

VOL. XCIX No. 33,945
Copyright, 1939, New York Tribune Inc.
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1939

THREE CENTS
New York City and Vicinity

than heretofore.

Acting on a report that "The New Masses," Communist weekly, would suspend publication after the next issue, which comes out on Thursday, a reporter phoned the offices of that publication. Jack Stark, the managing editor, admitted over the phone that the magazine's situation was very serious, and said that if sympathizers did not send in cash the next issue would be the last.

A short time later the reporter interviewed Joseph North and A. B. Magil, co-editors of the publication. Both contended that they had enough money not only for the next issue but for several after that. Mr. North explained, however, that the campaign for funds was a regular thing, "and there is no reason to believe now that our readers will not contribute as generously or even more generously than they have in the past." Mr. North admitted that if contributions were not forthcoming the magazine would have to suspend publication, but insisted this was not an unusual situation.

The critical situation of the magazine is illustrated in the following excerpt from the last issue of the magazine:

"We face financial suppression.

"Last week we appealed to our readers to save the magazine. We needed $7,000, we said, to cover our immediate needs. We received a little over $700. One tenth."

Despite the plea, Mr. North said, the magazine would continue publication and would shortly inaugurate a series of vital importance to the American public.

The recent Stalin-Hitler pact

IT'S UP TO YOU

YOU have read that clipping from the "Herald Tribune" on the opposite page?

Here is what happened. To date NEW MASSES has received $1,194 in its appeal for $7,000. As we told you last week, old debts that have come due threaten to strangle the magazine. We warned you that Congressman Dies is out to suppress NEW MASSES and all publications left of center; but the bill collectors threaten us with immediate extinction. We made that warning explicit in two appeals.

Our enemies, the warmakers, are watching the score. Monday of this week the principal Wall Street organ in America, the New York "Herald Tribune," sent a reporter, Paul Tobenkin, to our offices. "We just got a tip," he said, "that NEW MASSES was going to fold this week. I would like to verify the story."

Editors A. B. Magil and Joseph North told Mr. Tobenkin, "No. NEW MASSES is not going to fold this week. Whenever we have been in a tight spot we have told our readers openly, frankly, and they have come to the magazine's aid. You got a bum tip." The rest of the interview came off approximately as Mr. Tobenkin's story indicates.

He wrote a different story from the one he expected.

He wanted to write "NEW MASSES SUSPENDS PUBLICATION." That's the story Ogden Reid, publisher of the "Herald Tribune," wants to get. When Mr. Tobenkin left our offices he said, "You won't get your $7,000 now." He still expects to write his original story.

We put it up to you. Do you want it written?

We cannot say it more simply than this: though NM's circulation is growing, its back debts threaten it with extinction. There is no secret about that and that isn't news. But it will make a good story for the "Herald Tribune" IF you do not help us in this time of need.

If EVERY reader would send us ONE dollar immediately, we would disappoint Mr. Reid sorely.

But if you don't, Mr. Tobenkin may write that story.

He was willing to bet we wouldn't raise the $7,000 we needed.

What do you say, NEW MASSES reader?

Do you want to see a headline in the "Tribune": "NEW MASSES SUSPENDS PUBLICATION"?

Or do you want to kill that story?

THE EDITORS.

New Masses
461 Fourth Ave.
New York City

Enclosed please find $....., my answer to the "Herald Tribune."

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

10-31-39

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Between Ourselves

ON OUR back cover this week is one of the most important announcements we have ever carried. The forthcoming series on Silver Charlie Coughlin by John L. Spivak is enough reason for the fink press and the Dies committee frantically to redouble their efforts to put NM out of business. The facts we will print about Coughlin are the facts no other paper will touch. Defend NM against the warmongers. Send your contribution and the subscriptions of your friends for the sensational Spivak expose of the Detroit fascist. Help NM grow bigger and stronger than ever.

We will publish next week an article by Morris Kammen on the sources of Dies' labor-busting technique. Mr. Kammen has studied the post-war Lusk committee and the Palmer Red raids which were the devices of the open-shoppers to bust the AFL, and he makes a searching comparison.

We wish to announce the acquisition of Alvah Bessie as NM's drama critic. Mr. Bessie is the noted writer whose experiences with the International Brigade in Spain form the background of his newly published novel, *Men in Battle.* He has been associated with the Brooklyn *Eagle* drama department and at one time appeared on the stage himself for several seasons. His first review in NM was on the revival of Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted,* a play in which he appeared during its original presentation fifteen years ago.

New and old readers continue to praise the magazine. A Chinese reader in Honolulu writes, "NM is doing the job of interpretation and rendition of news splendidly. The only kick we have in Hawaii is that there's just too much land and water between New York and us."

From Birmingham, Ala., comes a letter which says, "Without NM it would have taken me too much time to comprehend the real meaning of international events. Your issues beginning September 5 of this year have been more valuable than any yet published."

Emjo Basshe, the playwright, whom many of our readers remember as a frequent contributor to the monthly NM, is critically ill at Bellevue Hospital, New York. He will appreciate letters from friends. They should be addressed to Ward B-2.

The NM ball, the annual affair that has attracted New York's writers, artists, and celebrities since 1911, will have an exciting new theme this year. Our 28th celebration on December 2 will be called "A Night in Trinidad," featuring the sensational Calypso music of the West Indies. The orchestra will be Gerald Clark's Caribbean Serenaders, well known Calypso recorders. The chief Calypsonian, or singer, will be the Duke of Iron, and the final touch of a West Indian carnival will be furnished by the Calypso Kid, Bill Matons, and his dancers. Webster Hall will be redecorated in tropical manner for the Carnival.

Dick Carroll's swing band will also be on hand to keep the festivities steaming. You can save money by buying your ticket in advance through NM. A call or letter to Jean Stanley, our director of affairs, will reserve a ticket. The phone number is CAledonia 5-3076. Advance tickets for "A Night in Trinidad" will cost $1. Admission at the door will be $1.50. Webster Hall, Saturday, December 2.

Our Speakers Forums are on tap with another busy section of the winter schedule. Joseph Starobin, political writer, will address the Karl Marx Society of Hunter College, Thursday, October 26, at 12:05 noon, on the subject "Class in World Politics"—Room 210. On Sunday, October 29, he will speak at 250 West 106 St., top floor, at 8:15. Mike Gold has three dates. The first is Friday, October 27, at 8:15, at Audubon Hall. Broadway and 166th St., where Mike will speak on "The USSR and the International Situation." Also on the program for a 25-cent admission will be the documentary film, *The River.* His second date is Thursday, November 2, at 8:15 at Public School 95, Sedgewick and Gouvernor Ave., the Bronx; and his subject is "The Plight of National Minorities in America and Europe." Mike Gold will also speak Sunday, November 12, at 2075 86th St., Brooklyn, at 7 p.m., under the auspices of the Jewish IWO School 19, on the subject "How to Stop Fascism."

Joseph North, editor of NM, will review the week's news Sunday, October 29, at 8:15 p.m., at 353 Sixth Avenue. Bruce Minton, labor historian, will appear before the Forum of Washington, D. C. on Sunday, November 5th.

Who's Who

FRANK GOELET is the pen name of a New York newspaperman who has been covering City Hall for many years. . . . V. J. Jerome is an editor of the *Communist.* . . . Milton Meltzer's book reviews and articles have frequently appeared in NM.

Flashbacks

EARL BROWDER, we recall on the occasion of his arrest, is not the first Communist Party leader in this country to face the "justice" of the capitalist courts. Charles E. Ruthenberg was sentenced to from five to ten years in Sing Sing on Oct. 29, 1920. Hearing the verdict, Ruthenberg said: "I have merely this to say for myself. I have in the past held certain ideals for a reorganization of society on a new basis. I have upheld those ideals and gone to prison for them when they were connected with the late war. I have stood by those principles irrespective of the result of this particular trial. I expect in the future as in the past to uphold and fight for those principles until the time comes for those principles to triumph and a new society is built in place of the present social organization." . . . And a few memos to the warmongers: On Nov. 1, 1914, the Bolsheviks issued a manifesto calling on the workers to turn the imperialist war into a civil war; on Oct. 28, 1916, Australian voters, organized by the IWW, and other anti-war labor groups defeated a military conscription law proposed by the reactionary "Labor" government; on Oct. 28, 1918, mutinous crews in the German high seas fleet put out the fires in the vessels they manned. And one day later, the monarchy in war-weary Austria-Hungary was overthrown.

David McKelvy White

In March 1937 this graduate of Princeton and Columbia stepped out of his position as a teacher of English at Brooklyn College in order to fight for loyalist Spain. He served as a machine gunner in Company 4 of the Washington Battalion (later the Washington-Lincoln Battalion) until October 1937, then returned to this country to chairman the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a post which he still holds. Mr. White, who has also taught at Lafayette College and City College of New York, is a member of College Teachers Union Local 537 and of the Association of American University Professors. He is a son of former Gov. George White of Ohio.

This Week

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Two weeks' notice is required for change of address. Notification direct to us rather than to the post office will give the best results.

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NEW MASSES

VOLUME XXXIII OCTOBER 31, 1939 NUMBER 6

The New York Election

How the progressive candidates stand. The pro-Tammany splitters within the American Labor Party. A record off-year registration.

DESPITE Messrs. Louis Waldman and Alex Rose there will probably be no khaki election in New York City this November. New Yorkers, while hating Hitler cordially, are politely declining in droves to enlist under the banner of Chamberlain. The crusade to defend the British empire has fallen flat in the American Labor Party and the city generally.

Millions of New Yorkers, hopelessly out of touch with the British Ministry of Information, are insistent on attending to local problems at this election. In fact, more than two million of them, a record for an off-year, registered October 9-14 with the intention of doing something about those problems. Surprisingly enough, in view of the war situation—or possibly because of it—there is considerable interest in the elections. It has been stimulated rather than lessened by the ill-starred attempt of certain leaders of the American Labor Party to project their pro-Chamberlain and anti-Soviet views directly into the municipal political scene.

The war, it must be candidly reported, was not much of a direct local issue up to a few weeks ago in the minds of New York voters. While it made all-absorbing reading, few if any ordinary burghers felt that there was a direct relationship between New York's election of councilmen and a few judges and the conflict abroad. However, after Rose and Waldman drew the issue in the Labor Party and began an expulsion campaign against those hardy souls who dared criticize the umbrella man, voters, particularly those who leaned leftward, perked up their ears. The unusual off-year registration, as Mr. Rose will learn to his chagrin, is due in no small measure to liberals and progressives who are anxious to grind a few warmongering bureaucrats' faces into the dirt. This is definitely not the year for the war party.

LOCAL ISSUES

The chief local issues of the campaign have not been crystallized too clearly in the public mind. Veteran politicians of both major parties are careful not to take a leaf from Alex Rose's book—they avoid the war question. If any of them discuss it at all, they are sensitive enough of the feelings of the electorate to speak in terms of peace and American neutrality. They know, if Mr. Rose does not, that in the other direction lies political suicide.

LaGuardia himself, one of the shrewdest progressives in American politics, has avoided frequent discussion of the war. What he has said brought little comfort to those who would involve America in the task of raking Chamberlain's chestnuts out of the imperialist fire. At the very start of the war he urged public officials to say nothing that might jeopardize American neutrality. The war, he said, was to be fought on the battlefields of Europe and not on the streets of New York. He developed the implications of his remarks even further in a surprise speech that brought an ovation from the recent American Federation of Labor convention at Cincinnati. The war in Europe, he declared bluntly, is "slaughter and sacrifice of human beings with no hope for the working people no matter how it ends. The working people were not consulted on the start of the war. They are not to have any say on how it is to end."

In a vague way the local campaign is lining up around LaGuardia, or more properly, LaGuardiaism. That is, candidates are being gauged to a large extent by whether they support the LaGuardia conception of municipal government—clean, progressive, pro-labor, with the emphasis on efficiency and social welfare needs—or whether they back the old Tammany methods. Tammany, yearning for the old patronage flesh pots, offers no particular program except obstruction of necessary social legislation, and occasional demagogy. Such success as it may achieve in this campaign will reflect not the strength of its program among the masses but the disunity among the labor and good government forces, a disunity promoted in the first instance by the reactionaries within the American Labor Party.

While there is unfortunately not the same unity of labor and progressives that existed in 1937, there is general agreement among the anti-Tammany forces on a number of local questions. County reform, which in simple terms means the abolition of a number of soft jobs filled by Tammany wardheelers and the consolidation of useless county offices, finds most of the anti-Tammany bloc in agreement. The same is true of housing, although there is considerable divergence of opinion on method. Most of the anti-Tammany forces agree with the LaGuardia program of a city-owned power plant and the labor proposals for a city-owned milk plant and various other consumer measures.

THE COMMUNIST CANDIDATES

But the most rounded-out program in the campaign has been advanced by the four Communist candidates: Israel Amter of Manhattan, Peter V. Cacchione of Brooklyn, Isidore Begun of the Bronx, and Paul Crosbie of Queens. While cognizant of the relatively limited powers of the City Council, the Communist Party has advanced a ten-point program

Write Them In

PERHAPS it is only a coincidence that the decision of the New York State Court of Appeals ruling off the ballot the four Communist candidates for City Council comes at a time when Communism is rather unpopular in certain circles—as unpopular as the Bill of Rights. And then perhaps it isn't a coincidence. The Court of Appeals hypocritically claimed "good legal grounds" for its action. The pettifogging grounds were the failure to give the assembly and election districts of the persons who signed affidavits certifying the petitions for the Communist candidates. On the day before, the appellate division of the Supreme Court had declared the petitions valid since the addresses were given. But the highest court in the state preferred to uphold the Tammany-controlled Board of Elections in denying elementary democratic rights to a political party which last year polled more than 100,000 votes in New York City. That the barring of the Communist Party was instigated by former Rep. John J. O'Connor, tory favorite of various fascist organizations, does not improve the odor emanating from this high-handed decision.

The Communist candidates are off the ballot, but they are not out of the election. A large write-in vote for Israel Amter, Manhattan; Isidore Begun, Bronx; Peter V. Cacchione, Brooklyn; and Paul Crosbie, Queens, is now more than ever a vote for civil liberties and a rebuke to the pettifogging reactionaries who seek complete domination of the City Council. Read James Dugan's article elsewhere in this issue and you'll learn why the diehards fear these representatives of the people.

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dealing with every major issue before the city. Concentrating on the question of housing, the Communist candidates have jointly advanced a $333,000,000 public housing program with a clear tax program for its financing. In sharp contrast to the timidity of the other parties and the official pussyfooting on the question, the Communist candidates propose to combat the blatant race hatred spewed forth on the streets by the followers of Father Coughlin, through legislation making it a crime to attack racial or religious groups.

Facing the most bitter anti-Communist drive since the Palmer raid days, the Communist Party has met new legal (actually political) difficulties. Acting on the objection of former Rep. John J. O'Connor, the Board of Elections threw the four Communist candidates off the ballot on so flimsy a technicality that even one of the hardened quartet on the board could not stomach it. After being overruled by the appellate division of the Supreme Court, the Board of Elections was upheld by the State Court of Appeals. It will therefore be necessary to write in the names of the Communist candidates. That the action against the Communist Party is aimed at all progressives is becoming clear to an increasingly large section of the public. Even the Red-baiting New York *Post,* uneasy of conscience, has urged that the candidates be reinstated on the ballot. The Communist nominees are waging a fighting campaign and making it clear to the people that a first-choice vote for a Communist candidate is a vote for peace, economic security, and the utilization of every legislative possibility in the City Council to make New York City a better place for the masses of people to live and work.

COUNCILMAN QUILL

Most spectacular of all the councilmanic struggles is Councilman Michael J. Quill's fight for reelection. Front page news from the day it began, the fight around Quill is more significant than it appears on the surface. The ALP reactionaries seek to put it only on the basis of Quill's rejection of their warmongering, anti-Communist, anti-Soviet resolution. But it is much more than that. Hated by every enemy of organized labor in New York City, Quill has become the symbol of the hundreds of thousands of bitterly exploited New York workers in the basic industries recently organized by the CIO. As such a symbol, at least, he deserved renomination in a party of labor. But the ALP leaders were apparently anxious to shove aside the CIO. *There is now not a single CIO member on the American Labor Party slate!*

That this is more than accidental was confirmed by the action of the ALP Executive's majority in studiedly ignoring all appeals from the CIO national convention to endorse Quill. It is a direct slap in the face of the 460,000 CIO members in New York City. It undoubtedly indicates the direction of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union leaders in the ALP. These forces, headed by David Dubinsky, have long been close to the official family of the AFL Executive Council and are said on good authority to be heading toward the arms of William Green, Matthew Woll, et al.

THE SPLITTING TACTIC

In terms of local politics the splitting move of the Waldman-Rose-Dubinsky-*Forward* clique has additional significance. It is an attempt to weaken the alliance of labor and the good government forces which successfully beat back Tammany's attempt to regain power in 1937, the alliance in which progressive labor played an independent and signally successful role. Unless checked it can only have the effect of returning Tammany to City Hall in 1941. Is that what Messrs. Waldman, Rose, Dubinsky, Sam Null, and associates are seeking?

There are persons of considerable authority who insist that this is actually the case. They point, for example, to the Brooklyn contest for district attorney. A notoriously corrupt Democratic political machine, unable to put over District Attorney William Geoghan again in the face of constant scandal in his office, nominated a judge who had a fair labor record in the hope that a liberal facade would ensure them against effective prosecution. Mayor LaGuardia and others sought to effect a combination against the Kelly Democratic machine by organizing a coalition similar to 1937. But no! Alex Rose and his friends this time wanted to play at "independence," knowing full well that their candidate, the discredited Old Guard Socialist Charles Solomon, could only contribute to the election of the Kelly candidate. Despite pleas from LaGuardia and others, the dominant leaders of the ALP refused to budge.

RELATIONS WITH TAMMANY

Political prognosticators who know their business insist that the Brooklyn incident, to coin a phrase, is no accident. For years, they point out, the coterie of lawyers, mostly retained by Dubinsky's ILGWU, have enjoyed the most cordial relationship with the Tammany judiciary and Tammany prosecutors. The arrangement, it is added, has been of mutual benefit to both sides. Now the relationship is ripening. In 1941 the political banns may be posted.

Much the same line of reasoning prevails among those progressives within the American Labor Party who are opposing the warmongering, rule-or-ruin tactics of the Rose camarilla. The general feeling is that the task of defending good government, of maintaining the alliance between the middle class reform elements and independent labor now devolves upon those battling the Waldman-Rose splitters. To these progressives it is more than a fight to maintain the American Labor Party against those who would disrupt or liquidate it. It is, to them and to many other informed New Yorkers, a grim fight to prevent Tammany from returning.

FRANK GOELET.

America and the Far East

A most remarkable and ominous development in Japanese-American relations seems to be under way: remarkable because the Japanese are finding a way of turning a rebuff into an advantage, and ominous in the sense that the position of China, and the support by the American people of China's war of independence are being sacrificed to the interests of American big business.

The American ambassador, Joseph C. Grew, made a sharp speech before the America-Japan Society in Tokyo on October 20, emphasizing that "the American people regard with growing seriousness the violation of American rights by Japanese armed forces in China, in disregard of treaties and agreements. When such opinion tends towards unanimity it is a force which a government cannot possibly overlook and will not fail to reflect in its policies and actions."

This *appears* to be a straight-from-the-shoulder indictment of Japanese aggression in China. But whether the American ambassador intended it or not, the Japanese press and government circles at first professed to be shocked that Americans hold such opinions of their "new order in Asia," and then followed up by suggesting negotiations with America on all outstanding issues.

Farsighted reactionary spokesmen in this country, such as Walter Lippmann, immediately took the cue to suggest that American-Japanese collaboration be undertaken in earnest—first, in the form of a favorable trade treaty to replace the treaty of 1911, denounced last July, and then on the broader basis of American-Japanese rapprochement in the Pacific.

In essence, the proposal is that the United States now play the Chamberlain role in the Far East: which means scuttling the measly American support to China, if necessary at the expense of China's freedom. The anti-Soviet intention here is also quite obvious. Now that Japan depends upon American support to an even greater degree (because Britain and France are occupied elsewhere) American big business wishes to press its advantage.

This development flagrantly ignores the sympathies of the American people, as distinguished from the American imperialists, for the people of China. It is fraught with formidable menace to China's great fight for liberation. That must be made clear to the American State Department in no uncertain terms.

The Students Speak

The *Daily Bruin* of the University of California recently polled the student body on the European war: 2,103 students, against twenty-eight, were for keeping out of the war.

Thirteen hundred students thought a German defeat would not prevent the spread of dictatorship, as against seven hundred who felt that it would.

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Meet Four Communists

The Red councilmanic candidates from Kings, Queens, Bronx, and Manhattan are the kind of men you can't vote for, according to the State Court of Appeals.

THE New York Board of Elections has decided, three to one, that Israel Amter, Isidore Begun, Peter V. Cacchione, and Paul Crosbie ain't fitten to be voted on by the free people of the metropolis. The decision has been confirmed by the State Court of Appeals. This very nicely disposes of any question in the minds of the people as to whether they want housing, jobs, civil liberties, and trade unionism, among other things. People just won't have to worry. They can vote for tory Tweedledum or his dastardly opponent tory Tweedledee, and be assured that most of the candidates will scotch any subversive moves to undermine our glorious heritage of old-law tenements, Coughlin sluggers, or Jim Crow's law in Harlem. Democracy has been made very simple by the Board of Elections; you can vote YES or MAYBE.

ISRAEL AMTER

Let us look at Israel Amter's side of the case.

Mr. Amter, the Communist Council candidate from Manhattan, is a tall, wiry fellow of fifty-eight with penetrating black eyes, born in Colorado, the son of a dirt farmer. To know what makes him click you must have heard him on a street corner, laying into the kind of thing represented by a Tammany Board of Elections. The voice is a calm baritone, full of force, the voice of a man who has been soapboxing before the people on the streets for twenty years.

A lesser man than Israel Amter would have stuck to his job of musical composition instead of stiffening his finger joints on wintry bivouacs in a public square. Some people are paid off that way; not Israel Amter. Since his student days in Germany, forty years ago, he has been a socialist. Once upon a time there was a socialist party, referred to as the Socialist Party, and Amter belonged to it. In 1914 a lot of the members of this party decided that Kaiser Bill, old Franz Josef, His Britannic Majesty, and Czar Nicholas II, were right and were fighting the good fight for et cetera, etc. Amter stuck with the socialists who said they were all bums and that the war was an imperialist war. In America these left-wingers finally had to create a new party in 1919, the Communist Party. Today the Communist Party says the new war is an imperialist war. Other parties are bleeding for Chamberlain, Daladier, and Colonel Beck.

Naturally Israel Amter isn't in good standing with the Socialists, for the simple reason that he is a good socialist. They resent it.

Amter led the first great unemployed demonstration in New York City in March 1930. He went to jail for it. Later on relief measures came. This makes Israel Amter as happy as the other Israel Amter might have been at the performance of his piano sonata in Carnegie Hall.

Amter lives in the heart of the East Side slums. He is a specialist in housing problems. He lives in the crowded slums, among the throngs of overcrowded children. He fights for lower milk prices, for a yardstick plan. He knows about milk from the upstate farmer's angle. He is state chairman of the Communist Party. He has been married for thirty-six years to Sadie Van Veen of the Woman's Commission of the party, who is as active as her husband. Amter occupies Room 515 on a long narrow corridor on the fifth floor of the ancient loft building at 35 East 12th St. He is up early, often misses his breakfast. His wife works in the same building, but he rarely knows where she is. Mrs. Amter has her own busy schedule. They occasionally encounter each other in a hallway and exchange opinions. Sometimes, if they are going the same way, they will walk down the hall hand in hand. Let's hurry up and put Amter in Council, folks, so he can take Mrs. Amter to the annual Council picnic.

ISIDORE BEGUN

Isidore Begun of the Bronx is a pest. In his long pestiferous career he has stung through several thicknesses of Tammany walrus hide. In 1920, this son of a Jewish emigrant from Pinsk (now a part of the USSR, hooray) became a school teacher, PS 55 in the Bronx, and a member of the Teachers Union, Local 5, AFL. The Tammany hogs used to eat a public school and a dozen teachers for dessert in the twenties. Young Begun began raising hell at the traditional Tammany acts of "retrenchment," overcrowded schools, and the old racket of grafting on school sites. The little, bespectacled gadfly stung the great Tammany hulk so mortally that the big herd got together in self-protection and stamped him out. He was Brought Up on Charges and Discharged. The vote was five to two. Some say the other two were for shooting him on the spot.

During his guerrilla warfare with Tammany, Begun accumulated many allies among the liberal teachers. He discovered a certain kind of coolheaded character in this group, persons who weren't confused and whose reactions were remarkably objective. No detective work at all revealed that they were Communists. Isidore Begun lost no time joining the Communist Party.

The gadfly had found the big swarm and the business of stinging elephants became the business of making them stay stung. He became educational director of the Communist Party and lent his scientific and educational talents to organizing research and educational activity in the party. He began to attend City Board of Estimate meetings. Tammany groaned. They had wiped this nasty little man out once and here he was big as life banging them over the head with statistics right in the holy of holies, the sacred wigwam itself, the Board of Estimate.

He went to Albany with his growing satchelful of facts and spread them out before the Legislature. The Right Honorable Assemblymen tried giving him the bird. Ha, ha! Look at the funny little Red. Isidore Begun wiped his glasses and countered with a quick barrage of the facts of life. He knew more about the budget on education, highways, milkshed troubles, health conditions, and civil liberties than most of the sages on these special committees put together. They didn't exactly come to respect him, most of these characters, but they did come to fear him and surreptitiously borrow some of his endless store of statistics. Some of them subscribed to the *Legislative Bulletin* that Begun was helping the party publish, and they found this made better sense than the official proceedings from the state printer.

The Bronx department of Isidore Begun's statistical encyclopedia is startling reading for citizens of that great and fabulous borough. He has analyzed rents, living conditions, heating facilities, sanitation, and so forth in a series of colossal charts. Take the Second Assembly District of the Bronx. Eighty percent of the houses below 149th Street are over thirty-five years old. Forty percent of the workers in this neighborhood live in homes without steam heat. So what? Housing! says Begun and he unrolls a blueprint showing a $50,000,000 housing project in Hunts Point, five $10,000,000 projects at St. Mary's Park, Mott Haven, 184th and Third Avenue, Park and 168th, and Westchester Avenue and 163rd. At low cost rentals 100,000 citizens of the Bronx can move into 75,547 new, clean, airy elbow rooms. How you gonna pay for it? Stick the harpoon into excess profits. Simple as the nose on your face.

Do you begin to see why the Tammany Board of Elections doesn't want Isidore Begun and Israel Amter on the ballot?

PETER VICTOR CACCHIONE

Why don't they want Pete Cacchione and Paul Crosbie on the ballot?

Peter Victor Cacchione is the Brooklyn Communist who missed a Council seat in the last election by 350 votes. Vile rumor mongers said 350 votes were just a fraction of what the boys threw away. My old man, who is an iron molder, works alongside some guys just like Pete, the second generation of Italian emigrant folks. Mussolini? *Basta,* they say, and make motions of firing the invincible Duce across the shop into the scrap pile.

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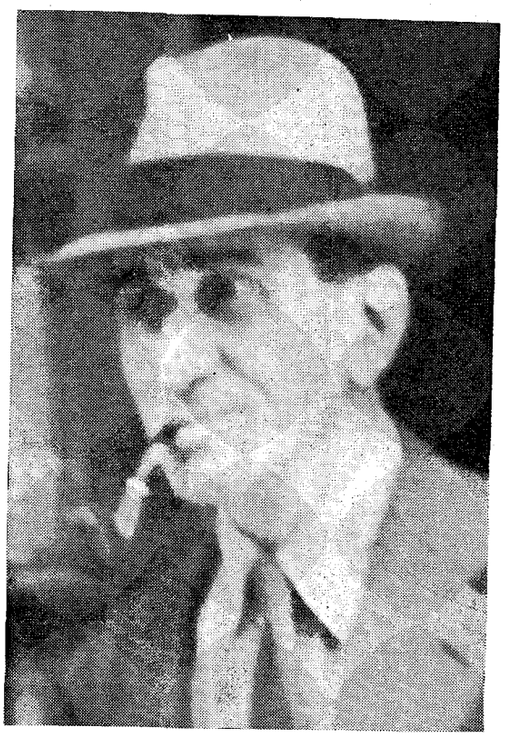
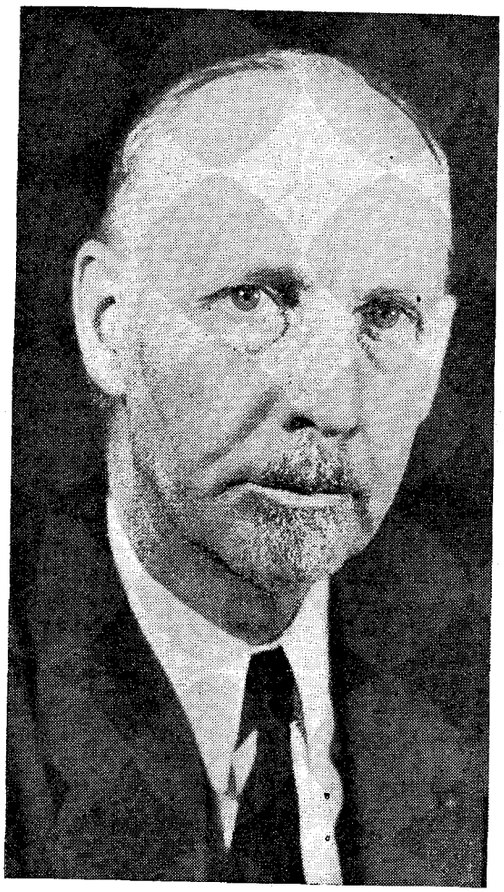


AMTER. *Always on the go, hustling from meeting to conference and then on to speaking engagements, Israel Amter astounds his friends with his mental and physical energy. Last year he polled over 100,000 votes for congressman-at-large; 75,000 New York county votes will elect him to the Council.*

CACCHIONE. *With his mother and father, Peter V. Cacchione manages to snatch a few hours of family relaxation. In the last councilmanic election Cacchione missed election by only 350 votes. This year—the tories don't like to think about Pete.*



CROSBIE. *Paul Crosbie, leader of the Communists of Queens County, is putting up a fight to oust at least one Tammanyite from the Council. His borough is considered the most reactionary one of the city. A charter member of the American Legion, he won his fight against the attempts of Legion reactionaries to expel him.*

BEGUN. *The young man on the right is Isidore Begun. A dynamo of political activity, strategist and teacher, Begun has a good chance of succeeding in his campaign in the Bronx. With him in the above photograph are William Z. Foster and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, two great people's leaders and noted Communists.*

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Pete Cacchione is a square, blond Italian-American who learned how to be a Communist the hard way. He was born in Syracuse, N. Y., forty-one years ago, and moved to Sayre, Pa., as a kid. His father kept a little store near the railroad tracks, the leading citizen among the two Italian families in Sayre. He and Pete's mother spoke Italian at home and filled Pete up with nostalgia for Foggia, father's home town, and Armenti on the Adriatic, where his peasant mother was raised. They were Catholics. Pete still believes in the true Catholicism they taught him; now he does something about it politically and the Brooklyn Catholics know it. Where did he get that uncomfortable number of votes?

Pete was the first Italian lad to be graduated from Sayre High School and he got a job as a railroad trainman. In 1917 he enlisted, fought in France, and came back to his job after the war. He joined a union, played baseball, and began running youth activities for the Catholic Welfare Council.

On the eve of 1929 Pete became a white collar. He began to sell insurance. In the Democratic Party of Sayre in 1928 he helped cut the old eight-to-one Republican margin down to Hoover's two-to-one. The crash tore off Pete's white collar.

He tried New York, Philadelphia; he heard about the jobs on Boulder Dam and lit out for Nevada. There he found that ten thousand applicants can't get three thousand jobs. He came back East, wondering. He went to work as a collector for Father Brandon's paper, the *Crozier Missionary,* but he discovered that you can't collect money from people who haven't any. One night in 1932 Peter Victor Cacchione became a guest of the Gold Dust Lodge on Corlears Street in Manhattan, the island of gold. Gold Dust Lodge was a flophouse.

On the street out front there were some pickets representing the Unemployed Council. They had ideas on how to fight the flophouse and Pete's cronies inside started to talk about taking up these ideas. Some stoolpigeons reported to the management and Pete's group were thrown to the pickets. Pete got an idea. If you want to live you've gotta fight for it with the people like yourself.

Pete marched to Washington with the jobless and felt Hoover's police clubs on his head. There were some Communists on the march. It was very logical. Pete joined the Communist Party.

In the seven years since then Pete Cacchione has sharpened himself into a front fighter for the people. He stands on the same housing and taxation, jobs and peace platform as the other Communist candidates. He fights this imperialist war; the Brooklyn Italians remember the last big war fought for nothing and the 100,000 Italian boys who died to win Fatso Mussolini and his castor oil. Pete is married to a Jewish girl, Dorothy Rosenfeld, who was born near the home of Isidore Begun's father in the new Soviet Byelo Russia, then part of Poland, amidst the usual terror of the pogroms. The same pogromist kind are operating in Brooklyn today, the Coughlin fascists and the Christian Fronters, who would lynch Christ if he tried to agitate on their block. Pete's against them, their world, and the reactionary gangsters who run them. A vote for Pete Cacchione will help assure that Brooklyn's man in Council will do what he can to stop the war drive and the racist madness. This is what the Court of Appeals has decided you can't vote for.

PAUL CROSBIE

But how in the world did such a fine figure of a man as Paul Crosbie become a Communist? Old revolutionary American stock and all that, classmate of F.D.R. at Harvard, officer in the Field Artillery during the first World War, a respectable insurance broker—the Communist candidate for Queens has all the earmarks of one of those high blood pressure boys who ride the Assassination Specials in from Long Island.

Paul Crosbie is a mild-looking man of fifty-eight with blue eyes and a neat white Doremus Jessup goatee. His grandparents in Wisconsin, where he was born, conducted a station on the Underground Railroad. He spent his boyhood on farms in Iowa and Illinois.

In 1933 Crosbie entered the elevator from his fourth floor insurance office at 130 Williams St., Manhattan. He was a man who had to answer a riddle before another day had passed. Why are people unemployed and starving in the richest nation in the world? When the elevator reached the ground floor Crosbie had decided to ask a Socialist. The Socialist said, good enough, let them burn the wheat and dump the oranges; Roosevelt is hurrying up the destruction of capitalism. When it crashes we Socialists will pick up the pieces.

This answer horrified Paul Crosbie: why did people have to suffer so the Socialists could pick up the pieces? Paul Crosbie had never seen a Communist as far as he knew. He dimly remembered, during the war the fellows talked about the Bolsheviks in Russia, a bunch of musclemen who had seized power and who would get bounced in a couple of weeks. The Bolsheviks were still in power in Russia. Paul Crosbie decided to find a Communist and ask his riddle.

He looked up "Communist" in the phone book and found himself at 35 East 12th St., national headquarters of the Communist Party, USA. The well dressed insurance broker with the goatee and a fine panama hat approached a small receptionist and asked his riddle. She tore off a corner of wrapping paper and wrote "Communist Manifesto, program of the Communist International, and *Daily Worker*" and told him to take it to the Workers Bookshop around the corner.

A week later he came back to the receptionist and said he liked the reading matter, now could he meet a live Communist and ask him some questions? He was introduced to Carl Brodsky and the two men talked for four hours. A week later Crosbie was a member of the Communist Party, USA, in Sunnyside, Queens.

His activity in the party on behalf of civil liberties, on picketlines, wherever men of courage were needed, led to a celebrated fight in the American Legion of which he is a charter member. Reactionaries tried to have him expelled. Crosbie fought back and the matter went to a Legion trial. His war record was closely scanned. Nobody had a better one. He had volunteered over the draft age despite a wife and five children, and had spent a year at the front, serving with distinction at St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Paul Crosbie remained Comrade Paul Crosbie in the American Legion and the Communist Party.

THEIR PLATFORM

JOBS AND SECURITY. No WPA cuts; work at union wages; support of the Wagner act and the wages-and-hours law.

SCHOOLS AND HEALTH: No school cuts; state educational aid; new schools; socialized medicine; *increased hospital facilities.*

CIVIL RIGHTS: A city law to outlaw the dissemination of racial and religious hatred; equal rights for the Negro people; and labor's rights to organize, bargain collectively, strike and picket.

HOUSING: Slum clearance; low cost housing projects; no evictions; reduction of interest rates in small homes.

CONSUMERS: Establishment of municipal yardsticks on milk and electric rates; lowering of prices; protection of consumers against high monopoly prices in food; rescinding the sales tax and distributing taxes to utilities and banks.

TRANSIT: Extension of bus and subway services; free transfers on all lines; maintenance of the nickel fare and of union conditions.

WOMEN, YOUTH, AND THE AGED: Protection of women in industry; equal vocational rights for women; extension of maternal clinics; free nurseries; full security for the aged; city youth employment service; vocational training for young people, ratification of the Child Labor Amendment.

HONEST GOVERNMENT: Elimination of county offices and remnants of Tammany graft.

PEACE: Keep America out of the new imperialist war by defending civil liberties, reemployment, and the unity of the people.

There you are, voters. You pays your money and you don't get your choice. If you subscribe to the above platform there is only one way to vote for it. When you enter the privacy of the voter's booth, take your trusty pencil and WRITE IN the name of the Communist candidate in your borough. It is extremely important that the candidate's name is spelled correctly. If you were to vote for P-A-U-L C-R-O-S-B-Y instead of P-A-U-L C-R-O-S-B-I-E, the tellers wouldn't have the faintest idea whom you meant and your vote would be null and void.

After you have written in the name, put the number "1" in the box in front of the name. In Manhattan vote for ISRAEL AMTER. In the Bronx vote for ISIDORE BEGUN. In Kings vote for PETER V. CACCHIONE. (Three C's in Cacchione.) In Queens vote for PAUL CROSBIE. Read the names carefully, write them correctly, and give the Board of Elections a little arithmetic.

JAMES DUGAN.

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The Chamberlain Socialists

In England, in Germany, in France, and in the United States, the Social-Democrats are trying to chain the working class to the imperialist war chariot. The hoax of the "holy war."

ONCE again Social-Democracy has come forward as the war party of imperialism in the ranks of the working class. As in 1914, the decisive leaders of the major parties of the Second International are attempting to chain the labor movement to the war chariot of finance capital. At a time when open capitalist spokesmen, under pressure of their own group conflicts, are publicly baring the imperialist character of the war, Social-Democratic leaders are whitewashing its predatory designs.

Thus, in England the reactionary leaders of the British Labor Party and the Trades Union Congress have formally given up labor's very independence for the duration of the war. By establishing a "national industrial front" with the bosses and by agreeing on "no election during the war," they have undertaken to deliver up the trade unions bound hand and foot by tyrannical emergency decrees far beyond even the hated Defense of the Realm Act of the World War years.

Under cover of this "truce," British capital has already launched a policy of drastic deflation bringing with it increased unemployment, lengthened hours, a wave of wage cuts, soaring prices, and a heavy tax burden upon the masses. The Citrine-Greenwood chiefdom is meeting with strong and determined resistance which is reflected in growing divisions in the leadership. More than a million organized workers, including unions of miners, engineers, and textile workers, have come out openly for increased wages. The near future is likely to see over 2,500,000 trade unionists involved in wage struggles.

LABOR'S ATTITUDE

The imperialist character of the war is becoming increasingly plain to British labor. In Scotland alone, two Railwaymen's Unions and the Scottish Miners Union have officially gone on record against continuation of the war.

In France the camp of Social-imperialism has its most blatant spokesman in Leon Blum, who will go down in history as the strangler of Spain and the abettor of Czechoslovakia's betrayal. Blum is now working with a zeal he never gave the working class, to help the Daladier-Bonnet clique perpetrate the hoax of a "holy war" by inciting hatred and war hysteria against the Soviet Union. By prompting outlawry of the Communist Party and terror against its leaders, he is facilitating the repression of all working class and popular liberties, that the crusade of French imperialism may proceed unimpeded.* Under decree, hours of labor are now up to sixty, instead of the forty-hour law, and overtime pay is only 10 percent above normal, as against the former 50 percent rate.

While censorship, much more rigorous in France than even in England, does not enable us to give a full picture of the working class resistance to the Blum-Faure-Jouhaux betrayal, information has percolated to show its determined mass character. Peace resolutions have been passed by a number of unions, while the expulsion-threatening resolution signed by Jouhaux and given wide publicity in the press was denounced in a statement by five members of the Administrative Committee and two secretaries of the General Confederation of Labor as follows: "We deem it necessary to state that this meeting [called by Jouhaux] can only be considered a fraction meeting, for a number of members constitutionally elected at the Nantes Congress, and Bureau and Executive members were neither informed nor called to the meeting."

REBELLION IN THE SP

In general, the Social-imperialists are far from having the field day of 1914. In neutral Switzerland, Leon Nicole, president of the Socialist Party of Geneva and political editor of the Social-Democratic papers *Travail,* Geneva, and *Droit du Peuple,* Lausanne, was expelled by the Swiss Socialist Party Executive for his consistent defense of the peace policy of the Soviet Union. The expellers were swiftly given to understand that they did not represent the sentiments of the membership, when the Socialist Youth of Geneva unanimously passed a resolution condemning the expulsion. The German Section and Center Section of the SP of Lausanne also endorsed the stand of Nicole, while at an Extraordinary Delegate Meeting of the Socialist Party of Geneva attended by two hundred delegates, and two hundred party members as guests, a protest demanding the immediate reinstatement of Nicole was passed with only two dissenting votes.

In Germany, where conditions are ripening for the working class and the entire opposition, at home and in exile, to advance with united strength towards a people's revolution, the reactionary Social-Democratic leaders continue to block the way to unity. Having by their policy condoned both the "non-intervention" and Munich, having sabotaged the peace front urged by the Soviet Union, they are now telling the people that the cannon of Chamberlain and Daladier will liberate Germany, that is, together with the "liberal wing" of the German imperialist bourgeoisie.

It would, of course, be the greatest of mistakes to consider the policy of German Social-Democracy as being in any way related to the slogan "Defeat your own bourgeoisie" which Lenin advanced in the World War. That slogan was a revolutionary call to the workers and peasants in uniform and out of uniform to transform the imperialist war into a civil war. It was a call to the masses to break with the Social-patriots of all stripes and to defeat capitalism in their respective lands. The policy of the German Social-Democratic leaders today, as then, is to guarantee the maintenance of German capitalism, to prevent the transformation of the imperialist war into a war for the destruction of imperialism.

The issue is clear: German Social-Democracy is shamelessly offering its services to Chamberlain and Daladier to swerve the people's movement from abolishing, in a revolutionary way, not only Nazism, but its source—capitalism. Their policy can be construed as one of maintaining capitalism through the creation in Germany of a lackey state subservient to Anglo-French imperialism.

Thus, in June of this year the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany stated in its "Theses on the Situation":

> The refusal of the united front with the Communists [by the Social-Democratic "Party Executive"] cannot be explained by stubbornness and fossilization. Behind this refusal stands the political plan, jointly with reactionary forces from abroad, to prevent a real German people's revolution and to repeat 1918. . . .
>
> Behind the strict refusal of the united front with the Communists by the Party Executive is concealed the political plan to play tomorrow the same criminal role against the future German people's revolution, with the generals, the bourgeois circles, and foreign bayonets, that the Eberts and Noskes played in 1918 against the German working class and against the German Revolution.

In the United States, the Social-imperialists, despite their lip service to peace, are whipping up sentiment to involve our country in the war. The reactionary Social-Democratic Federation, led by the very same Oneal-Lee-Cahan-Waldman crew which twenty-two years ago first opposed and then sabotaged the anti-war resolution adopted by the St. Louis Convention of the Socialist Party, adds its voice to the war whoops of Martin Dies in seeking to stifle and repress the stanchest fighter for principled peace and against involvement in the imperialist war—the Communist Party. By inspiring, in conjunction with Trotskyites, Lovestoneites, and other

*The full infamy of Leon Blum is revealed in a United Press dispatch appearing in the New York *Times* of October 17. Commenting on the movement now begun by Blum for immediate convocation of the Chamber of Deputies, the dispatch states: "Mr. Blum said that it would have been a danger to the state to permit Parliament to meet while Communists were present to speak against the war and insult the men in the trenches, but added that now that the Communists had been expelled and arrested the session could be held to strengthen understanding among all parties"—*among all warmongering parties!*

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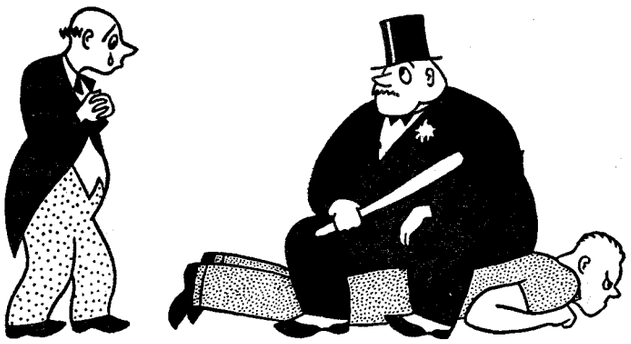

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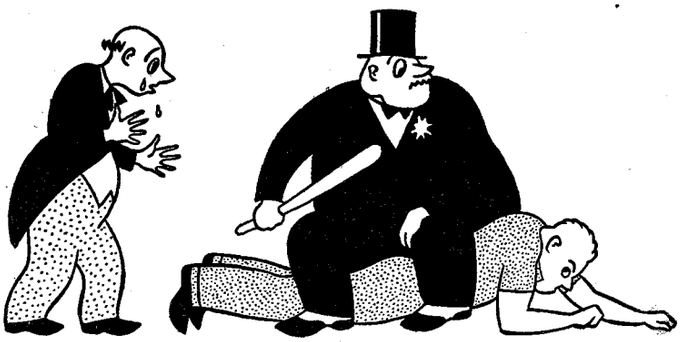

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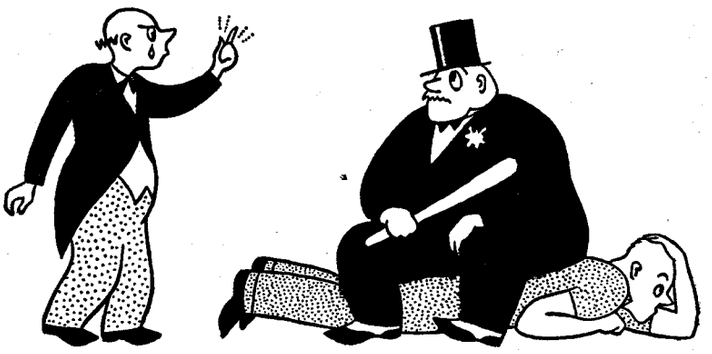

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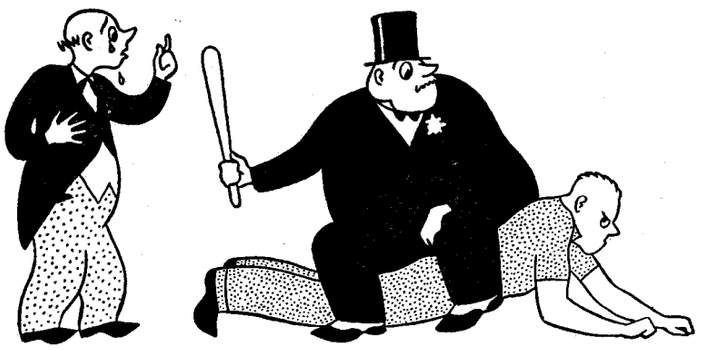

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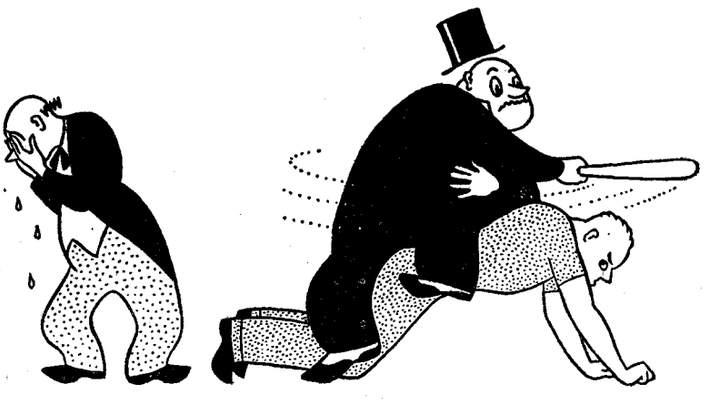

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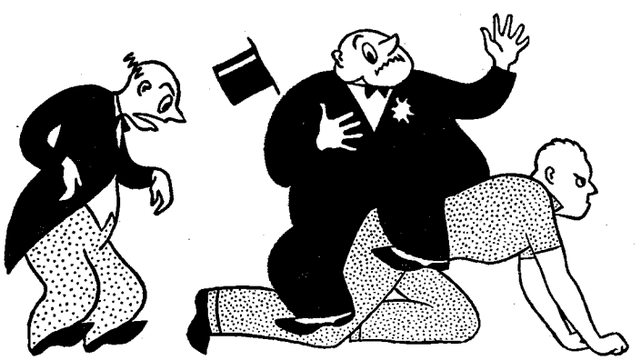

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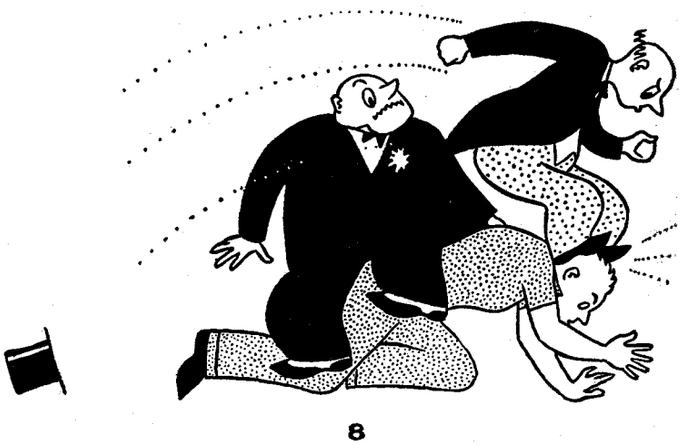

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A Social-Democrat Leader Does His Bit

Crockett Johnson

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Soviet-hating cliques, actions like the recent war-inciting, Red-baiting expulsion edict of the State Executive Committee of the American Labor Party, these traitors are clearly trying to split and weaken the labor movement and to drag the American people into a war from which only finance capital will be able to profit.

PROPAGANDA FOR WAR

The *New Leader,* official organ of the Social-Democratic Federation, is replete with propaganda that is clearly part of a drive for American involvement in the war on the side of Anglo-French imperialism.

In the issue of September 16, Louis Waldman vaunts the warmongering role of his Social-imperialist confreres in England and France: "Social-Democrats and labor parties of all shades of opinion have not only joined but led their governments into a firm stand. They regard this as a war of liberation."

In the issue of October 7, William E. Bohn attacks those striving to keep America out of the imperialist war: "The liberals, radicals, etc. . . . who fight desperately against our helping Britain and France . . . are on the wrong side because their minds have ceased to function. Once they realize what is at stake they will cease to be neutrals."

For a dead giveaway of this Chamberlain-Socialism we present the *New Leader's* star columnist, Charles Yale Harrison, whose September 16 contribution fairly bristles with impatience to send America "over there"—*to attack the Soviet Union.* He blurts forth: "There are things in this world worth fighting for and the prospect of crushing Hitler and Stalin definitely comes under this category. I shall be called a warmonger. The epithet does not worry me in the least. I am an old soldier, ladies and gentlemen, and this is my war."

The difference between the more open pro-war stand of the Social-Democratic Federation and the position of Norman Thomas and his baker's-dozen "Socialist" Party is one merely dictated by division of labor. Thomas' sabotage of the struggle against "appeasement" has long since revealed him as a supporter of Munich and all it stood for. The essence of his present position, shorn of its demagogy, is epitomized in his demand for an embargo against the Soviet Union. Not even the imperialist governments of England and France have dared to question the neutrality of the Soviet Union; but the "Socialist" Norman Thomas, with a flagrant cynicism that spells ideological bankruptcy, includes the Soviet Union among the belligerents, in order to set the scene for imperialist invasion of the socialist state, the heart of the world working class. Indeed, every word and every action of this unctuous demagogue is now more than ever directed toward the breeding of enmity and distrust against the Soviet Union, and toward the final aim of provoking a counter-revolutionary war against the workers' republic.

The vile reality of Norman Thomas' position is exposed by words out of his own mouth. In the September 30 issue of the *Socialist Call* he opens his column with the following statement:

> If I thought that American participation in Europe's war would end, once and for all, the regimentation of fascism, Black, Brown, or *Red* [my emphasis—V. J. J.], I should with a heavy heart raise my voice to put America into the war. If it is a necessary war, let's get all the way in, not half in, and clean up the job once and for all.

It is significant that the Social-traitors of all brands are sicking the hounds of war against the land of socialism precisely when the imperialist war is intensifying the whole world conflict between the moribund predatory system of capitalism and the new order of advancing, liberating socialism.

SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC TACTICS

Of course, Social-Democracy cannot today adopt methods entirely like those of twenty-five years ago, although its basic policy is the same, namely, to tie the laboring masses to the imperialist war machine. At all times its methods are sedulously adapted to the utmost possibilities for demagogy that a given situation offers, reflecting the needs and aims of imperialism in that situation. Thus, if it is possible to play on the anti-fascist sentiments and peace aspirations of the masses, Social-Democracy directs its demagogy accordingly. And so we see today the spectacle of a hideous imperialist war clothed in phrases of "Hitler must go!" "An end to Hitlerism!" This, from the very "Socialists" who only a year ago bade "Godspeed" and "Bon voyage" to Chamberlain and Daladier on their mission of collusion with Hitler!

The moral abasement to which a Blum can sink in his effort to line up the French people for imperialist war is strikingly illustrated in the following abject plea for belief in the purity of Chamberlain's motives:

> I insist that the Franco-British war against Hitlerism is not based upon any selfish or mercantile calculations on the part of England, that victory will bring neither the suppression of a formidable competition on the world market nor the conquests of new markets, that far from serving the interests of the City [the London financial center], war can but prove a menace and a prejudice to her undertakings and that England, in coming into this war, is guided by interests of another kind—the desire to preserve the interests of Europe, human civilization, and her own security.—New York *Herald Tribune,* Oct. 2, 1939.

Certainly the peoples of England and France desire to right the wrongs of Munich, to save the world for peace. But is the war that is actually being prompted by the Chamberlain-Daladier regimes that kind of war?

Facts give the lie to Blum's cant about Britain's—or France's—altruistic war. They laugh out of court his impudent claim that British imperialism's war against Germany does not stand to achieve "the suppression of a formidable competition." Surely so well posted a man as the erstwhile premier must have heard of the German "desperate exports," her dumping of goods, and a whole variety of unfair trade practices to the end of undermining the commerce of British and American imperialism in the Balkans, Latin America, and elsewhere. Surely he must have heard of the formidable German economic and ideological penetration in British colonies and dominions. He cannot be unaware of German penetration in Cyprus and Malta; in Egypt, Palestine, and North Africa, following the visit of the Nazi youth leader, Baldur von Schirach, to those parts; in India, where the slogan of "the similarity between National Socialism and Islam" has gained in influence; in South Africa, in Australia, and preeminently in Canada, where Duplessis, premier of Quebec, is an outspoken pro-fascist.

What indeed was Hitler's January 30 address to the Reichstag but a declaration of trade war against British finance capital to last until he was given colonies? He boasted that German-made small cars had usurped practically half of England's trade in this commodity in her own colony of South Africa, and closed with the challenge that "Germany must export, or die." This challenge of German imperialism was accepted by her capitalist rivals. The Anglo-American Trade Agreement, concluded shortly before the Reichstag address, was manifestly entered into for the purpose of overcoming German imperialism's "formidable competition on the world market" which M. Blum would now so strangely conceal.

So strangely? Not if we bear in mind Lenin's classic declaration that in its declining stage, capitalism finds in Social-Democracy its main social prop. Without the treacherous Social-Democratic leaders could the laboring masses have been delivered to the warmongers in 1914? Without this lightning-rod could their anger have been so long diverted from its proper object? And without those very Social-imperialists could the warmongers now succeed in splitting the working class, in weakening its resistance to the master-class war, in deceiving large sections of the masses with catch words such as "human civilization"?

SMOKESCREEN FOR IMPERIALISM

The Blums' present usefulness is to conceal the basic objective of British and French imperialism in the current war. Imperialist Britain and France have not abandoned their objective of a military attack upon the Soviet Union, which was the impelling purpose of their Munich policy. They are today the prime organizers of that attack—a Western anti-Comintern alliance. Their immediate objective in this war is to bring Germany into line, to redirect her course to the eastward march route of *Mein Kampf.* Their aim is to re-divide Europe, to consolidate their imperialist hegemony on the continent and in the world, and, above all, to bend Germany to their will for a combined assault upon the Soviet Union.

It is not basic whether their intention is to depose Hitler in favor of another Fuehrer. The Germany they want for their predatory

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designs is not a free, democratic Germany. They are in the war to prevent such a Germany from coming into existence. Their very conduct of the war signifies this. They want to subdue Germany and yet not to inflict a crushing defeat. They fear a cataclysmic outcome in Germany, as they feared it at the time of Munich. Above all, they do not want the German people to be free to decide what to substitute for Hitlerism when the decisive moment comes. Therefore, their anaconda war of blockade and slow constriction, apart from considerations of military strategy, is politically calculated to bring Germany to terms, to impose on it a "super-Versailles," without too greatly upsetting the status quo. Simultaneously, they fear the wrath of their own peoples at the moment of inevitable disillusionment—the revolutionary consequences of their own homelands, as also in India, Indonesia, Iraq, and throughout their empires. Thus, because of their predatory aims and of their precarious positions at home, the imperialist powers see their main enemy in the Soviet Union, the embodiment of peace, democracy, socialism.

That this was, and is, the sinister strategy of Anglo-French imperialism is brought home in an article in the important British church organ, the *Methodist Recorder,* of October 5, in the following revealing words:

> If the Western democracies refrained a year ago from helping Czechoslovakia, it was partly because they felt that a vigorous Nazi Germany was an effective antidote to Comintern imperialism. It may be that Russia is so far impregnated with Bolshevism as to exemplify—as the Webbs suggest in their work on Soviet Communism—a new civilization; and if so, it must at least be driven back from its fresh encroachment on Europe. Arriving in Germany would present a new problem to the Allies. For its first result would probably be a declaration of military rule in Germany and a rival attempt to seize power by the Communists. It is conceivable that in these perilous circumstances the military rulers in Berlin would turn to the Allies, patch up a peace and invite their help in opposing the Russian invasion. Their strategy would be relatively easy for them. The Baltic would be open to the British Navy.

Having refused to form a peace front with the Soviet Union, which alone would have prevented the war or have guaranteed for it an anti-fascist character, the governments of England and France cannot now be said to be engaged in a just war. Their quarrel with Germany is not a quarrel with fascism, despite their cries of "Hitler must go!" Because of their cumulative sabotage of the peace front before the war began and the predatory, imperialist character of the war on both sides, the issue of bourgeois democracy versus fascism is not involved. The further counterposing of non-fascist to fascist governments as the basis for alignments in international relations is now devoid of its former significance.

There is danger now that the United States may be drawn into the war to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Anglo-French imperialists—a task that the Soviet Union declined. The danger increases with every day of the war. Already demagogues declaim "This is our war!" Others, feeling that this is not the proper time to press for America's involvement, are biding their time for a riper moment.

The American people are opposed to participation in the imperialist conflict. Trade union bodies of both AFL and CIO too numerous to list have taken a strong stand against involvement. Many church bodies have done likewise. This anti-war sentiment must be given the broadest expression. Let the warmongers know the temper of the American people.

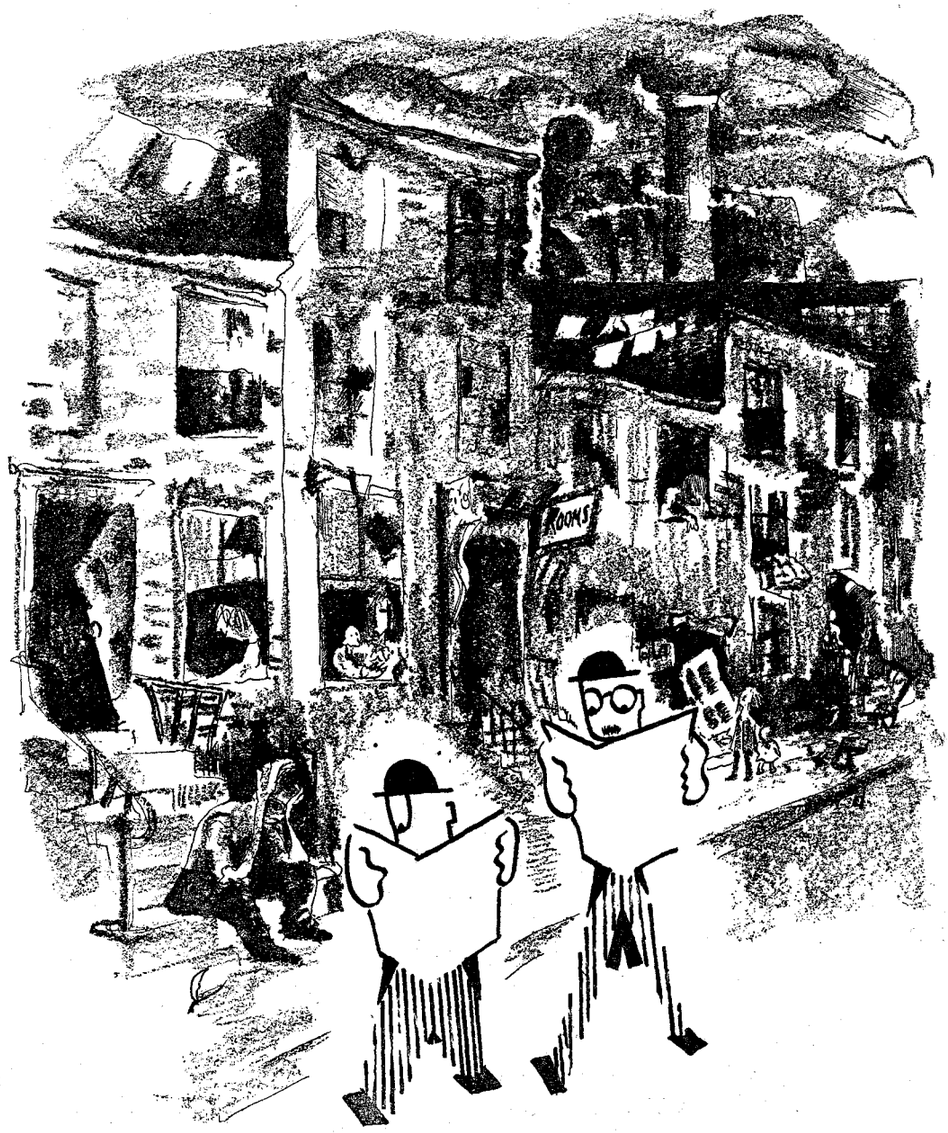
The urgent tasks of the moment are to implement the peace sentiments of the people by concrete legislation towards this end, and to develop the struggle against profiteering; for the vigorous continuation and expansion of the program for social security, for the strict enforcement of the Wagner act and wages-and-hours law, for maintaining and extending civil liberties. It must be emphasized that any abrogation of civil liberties directed against the Communists is a step for the wholesale denial of constitutional liberties to all Americans, and for the preparation for America's entry into the plunder war.

In its historic manifesto of September 19, the Communist Party declares:

> The war that has broken out in Europe is the Second Imperialist War. The ruling capitalist and landlord classes of all the belligerent countries are equally guilty for this war.
>
> This war, therefore, cannot be supported by the workers. It is not a war against fascism, not a war to protect small nations from aggression, not a war with any of the character of a just war, not a war that workers can or should support. It is a war between rival imperialisms for world domination. The workers must be against this war. It is a war that threatens the American people as well as the peoples of the whole world.

All Americans must be concerned with how to organize and give expression to the will of the people to keep our country out of the imperialist war, how to bring about America's cooperation with the efforts of the Soviet Union to end the robber war before it engulfs all mankind.

V. J. JEROME.



W. Clinton

"Dorothy Thompson says it's the end of civilization as we know it."

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William Gropper

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Aimed at Democracy

WHEN the storm clouds gather, one doesn't have to be a prophet to predict that it may rain. And one doesn't have to be a prophet to know that when a drive starts against Communists, there's something blowing up against American democracy that is likely to leave it limp and battered.

The arrest of Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party, on a flimsy charge involving a minor technical violation of the passport laws, and the banning from the ballot of the four Communist candidates for City Council in New York are storm signals. The Communists are the first victims. Who will be next?

It may be contended that there were legal grounds in both cases. But only those who are blind to the forces operating in America and the world will fail to see the real political meaning behind these legal technicalities. The New York *Herald Tribune* declares that the attack on Browder "may well be the first means of mass legal action against leading party members." This is an ominous note. One has only to look at Germany—or recall our own Palmer raids in 1920—to realize how elastic the term "Communist" can be.

The arrest of Browder is the first important victory of the Dies committee in its campaign for the suppression of the Communist Party. This is true not only in the sense that it was the Dies committee which first raised the question of Browder's passport, but more significantly in the fact that the Department of Justice has acted at the direct prompting of the committee. The Justice Department has tried to explain away the "curious coincidence" that it took steps against Browder only a few hours after the Republican National Committee had issued a statement in the name of Rep. J. Parnell Thomas, Dies committee member, demanding that the department act. Coincidence or not, the part played by the Dies committee in instigating this attack on the Communist Party is clear. Equally clear is the real objective of the committee. The tone and direction of its activities were indicated at the very outset when it hired as its first investigator the former labor spy, anti-Semite, and pro-Nazi, Edward F. Sullivan.

The readiness of the Department of Justice to jump when the Dies committee cracks the whip shows how real is the danger we pointed to in last week's issue: that the united front of the New Deal and the dominant Wall Street overlords in regard to foreign policy may also have its repercussions on the domestic front. "The forces which are moving against American civil liberties," said Earl Browder at the recent National Conference on Civil Liberties, "are the same forces which want this war to go on as long as possible for the sake of the profits they expect to make out of it, and which are preparing to take this country into the war at an opportune moment." And the Dies committee, which only a year ago was condemned by New Deal spokesmen for its anti-New Deal smear campaign, is today receiving the cooperation of the New Deal attorney general who was himself a victim of the committee's activities in Michigan.

Reaction always seeks to maintain the pretense of legality for its anti-democratic practices—at least in the first stages. But this spurious legality is the knife in the back of the Bill of Rights. This is the danger that confronts all Americans. The Communist Party can continue to exist even if it is driven underground, but the Bill of Rights cannot. Outlaw one section of democratic belief and the weapons have been fashioned to outlaw all. Hitler proved it in Germany. Daladier is proving it in France. Shall we wait until Martin Dies proves it in the United States?

Friends of Imperialism

AS THE neutrality battle in the Senate approaches its end, it is clear that the chief casualty has been neutrality itself. The campaign to repeal the arms embargo has had only one objective: aid to Britain and France in the imperialist war against Germany. Everything else is sham. Even Senator Pittman, sponsor of the administration's cash-and-carry bill, has openly declared his desire to help Anglo-French imperialism and has gone so far as to brand as a belligerent a peaceful, neutral nation, the Soviet Union.

The neutrality debate has been attended by a most remarkable series of "accidents." It is of course only an accident that repeal of the arms embargo happens to be in the interest of Britain and France. It was likewise only an accident that at the church service which President Roosevelt attended last Sunday, the pastor, Rev. Frank R. Wilson, invoked a prayer that King George "may vanquish and overcome all his enemies," and dedicated the Bible presented to the church by the king on his visit here last June. And it was only an accident that President Roosevelt last week banned submarines of belligerents from American territorial waters while taking no action against surface warships. The United Press made clear the meaning of this when it stated that the President "drove a line of differentiation between surface fighting ships, such as those with which Britain controls the seas, and submarines, on which Germany is basing its hope of smashing the British blockade."

All of which is predicated on the assumption that America has a stake in a British-French victory. Alfred Duff Cooper, former first lord of the Admiralty, on his arrival in this country the other day revealed the true aims of the Chamberlain government. Speaking of the coming revolution in Germany, he said: "I think it will be a revolution from the right, a conservative revolution. Very likely there will be a monarchical revival." In other words, a "revolution" which may eliminate Hitler, but leave intact the terror regime of fascism. Is it for this that the repeal lobby, which draws its inspiration from Wall Street, is asking the American people to risk their neutrality and their peace? Senator Borah spoke very much to the point when he said over the radio the other night: "We may send munitions and arms to Europe, but they will not be used to destroy Nazism. They will be used to settle the questions of territory and power."

For Neutrality

AS FOR the American people themselves, all signs point to a growing skepticism about the character of the Chamberlain-Daladier war and a growing disinclination to involve the United States on their side. A new Gallup poll shows that whereas in the first week of the war, 40 percent of the voters gave an affirmative answer to the question: "If it appears that Germany is defeating England and France, should the United States declare war on Germany and send our army and navy to Europe and fight?" today only 29 percent favor such action. Another recent Gallup poll revealed that only 5 percent wanted America to enter the war immediately on the side of Britain and France, while a month earlier it had been 16 percent.

The new *Fortune* survey indicates a similar trend. The magazine reports that approval of President Roosevelt's foreign policy—which is pro-British—has declined 13 percent since September. At the same time sentiment favoring equal treatment for all belligerents has increased 13 percent.

While a substantial majority of Americans side with Britain and France because they mistakenly believe these countries are fighting a war against fascism, there is no doubt that an equally substantial majority oppose steps that may involve the United States in hostilities. The Gallup poll asked the question: "Do you think the United States should do everything possible to help England and France win the war, even at the risk of getting into the war ourselves?" Only 34 percent replied in the affirmative, while 66 percent were opposed. Unfortunately, if one is to judge by the neutrality debate in the Senate, these 66 percent have not yet found a way of making themselves heard in Washington.

Washing the Empire Linen

THE people of India always say, "Pardon?" when anyone mentions British "democracy." They have known it for three centuries and it hasn't been Kipling at all. That's why the statement of the marquess Linlithgow, viceroy for India, to the effect that dominion status must await the conclusion of the war is rousing the widest protest. The

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marquess explained that the British government had not yet defined its war aims with "ultimate precision," adding that much would depend on the "circumstances in which the war came to an end." The marquess of Zetland, secretary of state for India, told the House of Commons that dominion status "really wouldn't be practical, nor do I believe it would be in the true interests of the Indian people themselves." Instead, the marquess advised them to "strive after that agreement among themselves without which they will surely fail to achieve that unity which is an essential of that nationhood . . . of which her leaders have long dreamed. . . ."

This is the old eyewash, made more ironic and disgusting by the fact that identical tactics were pursued in 1914. It is the government itself, of course, which has fostered disunity among the people in India, playing off the native states against the Indian National Congress, and the Moslem population against the Hindus.

Much depends upon the stand of the congress leadership. The native officials in eight provincial governments have been ordered to resign in protest against London's attitude, but the civil disobedience campaign with its potentialities for popular "excesses" is being delayed. Cagy old Gandhi expresses great dissatisfaction with the British but negotiations for a compromise continue. The position of such left-wing leaders as S. Chandra Bose, the great Bengal revolutionist, has not been made clear, but Jawaharlal Nehru, who spent such a significant week in Chungking, China, just before the war broke, has been appointed chairman of the congress' War Emergency Committee.

The recent manifesto of the Indian National Congress slashes through the hypocrisies which still beset many people in the West. It declares that:

> The governments of Great Britain and France declare that they are fighting for democracy and freedom against aggression, but their past history is full of betrayals of proclaimed ideals.
>
> If the present war is for defending the status quo, imperialist possessions, the colonies, and vested interests, then India can have nothing to do with it. . . . If Britain fights for democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism and establish full democracy in India. . . . For this the committee [of the congress] is eager to help, but it cannot cooperate in a war conducted on imperialist lines for the consolidation of imperialism.

Sentimental imperialists often describe India as the "brightest jewel of the imperial crown." She may yet prove the empire's Achilles heel.

Balkan Counterpoint

THE real fronts of the war do not appear on the military maps. Battles are being waged in which guns whisper; the most explosive shrapnel is diplomatic, the most telling ammunition of all. Whatever the war between the Maginot and Siegfried lines, the dimensions of more significant fronts emerge between the lines of the American press. Take the Near East, where the British have just concluded a stage of their diplomatic counter-offensive, aimed not so much at Germany as at the Soviet Union. The scope of this maneuver is so wide that the Italians may be aligned with the Allies as a result of it, and repercussions, exemplified by changes in the Bulgarian Cabinet, are sure to follow.

The British have secured the cooperation of the Turks in keeping the Dardanelles open, at the same time employing the Turks to prevent any further improvement of the Soviet Union's strategic position in the Black Sea. While this delicate maneuver appears to drive a wedge in Russo-Turkish relations, it was also intended, according to *Izvestia* for October 21, to "draw the Soviet Union into a combination directed mainly against Germany and the eventual opponents of Britain and France in the Mediterranean basin."

Izvestia, which is the official journal of the Soviet government, made it quite clear that while continued relations with Turkey are desirable, the Soviet Union considers the Anglo-French-Turkish alliance as bringing her traditional friend into "the orbit of war." Great Britain, it appears, cannot count upon Russian neutrality to the point where deals can be made behind Russia's back with Reichswehr generals and other reactionaries at the expense of the German people. On the contrary, the Soviet Union indicates clearly that it will tolerate none of "the 'artful' plans of those who tried again to kindle enmity between Germany and the Soviet Union."

In the American press, the inner relation of these events is distorted, not only because of pro-British and anti-Soviet bias, but also because the Nazis are in such a difficult position that they are compelled to identify themselves with every turn of Soviet diplomacy. The strange result of this is that when the American press exaggerates Soviet-German collaboration, it paradoxically plays into Herr Ribbentrop's hands.

Britain's Intelligentsia

WHO wants the imperialist war? News filtering through from Britain indicates that the British intellectuals want serious consideration of peace possibilities. George Bernard Shaw, whose previous statements on the war have pointed out its imperialist character, writes in the London *Daily Worker,* "The sooner the order is given to cease fire and turn up the lights, the better." H. G. Wells urges the freest possible public discussion of Chamberlain's war aims, but opposes an immediate armistice. J. B. S. Haldane has called for an immediate peace.

On the foreign policy of the USSR British cultural leaders are decidedly clearer than their muddled brethren three thousand miles away in America. Professor Haldane in a lengthy letter to the *New Statesman* says that French and British imperialists "can hardly complain that the Soviet Union remains neutral in the struggle, and occupies itself in stemming Hitler's advance and abolishing feudalism in Eastern Europe." John Strachey states that "it is high time for progressives in this country to stop repining about the Soviet government having ditched the British government of Mr. Chamberlain—as it undoubtedly has. Is it not rather our job to work harder, and to unite more closely than ever before in order to remove from office a government which, whatever we think about the Soviet Union, has got the British people into that 'fiasco' of which Stalin issued his now famous, but then unheeded, warning last spring?"

Finally Sean O'Casey, in a reply to H. N. Brailsford's obscurantist position, has rendered the entire controversy unnecessary:

> Mr. Brailsford says the Poles have been crushed. That is not so, for millions of them are as fit as they were and soon will be a lot fitter under the Soviet rule. They have been snatched from ruin by the Red Army, precisely what France and England pretended they wanted her to do. She has headed off Hitler.
>
> It seems to me that Mr. Brailsford is looking at, and thinking of this matter, not from a socialist, but simply from an English nationalist point of view. He writes of the Soviet Republic as if she were the old empire, fastened to oppression, plunder, and aggrandizement.
>
> Two-thirds of Poland is now socialist, and the Red Army is two hundred miles nearer us all, and pushing hard on the shoulder of Nazi Germany. After all, the peasants and workers of Germany, even Nazi Germany, are potential socialists, and militant socialism is knocking at her doors.
>
> If the Soviet method of life be good then it is good that the rest of the world see more of it. Wealth and privilege must give way before it.
>
> Meanwhile, the Soviet power, so long held at arm's length, advances, her Red Army to the fore, her artists, actors, intellectuals, and collective farmers close behind, all imbued with the one purpose—the bringing of a better-planned method into the ordering of life.

Minneapolis Frameup

LAST week in Minneapolis a federal court found eight WPA workers out of twelve guilty of "conspiracy" to violate the Woodrum Relief Act. They were the first batch of 168 workers to stand trial on that same charge, a charge made against them because they walked off their jobs last July in protest against the tory relief bill demolishing the prevailing wage rate. The fight against Woodrum's woodchopping was started by the building trades unions and supported by labor all over the country. When these WPA workers struck, the employers bent on driving down labor's standards went out to get them with guns and gas and then arrest warrants.

When sentence is delivered the federal court may send the convicted up for two years or fine them $5,000. The other defendants will be tried in groups from week to week. Their fight for the right to protest against attacks upon their living standards is every progressive's fight. Civil liberties will not be denied only those who oppose America's entrance into the imperialist war. Minneapolis shows that behind the screen of war hysteria reaction will try to cut down all of labor's rights.

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Crime and Punishment

THE rate of crime and the treatment of criminals are among the best indices to the health and sanity of a society. Last week at the sixty-ninth annual convention of the American Prison Association, facts about our country startling enough to make press headlines were cited. James V. Bennett, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, presented the problem:

> Fifty-six percent of the seventy thousand to eighty thousand men and women leaving prison gates this year will be back within five years if past experience holds true. This is surely no record of which we may be proud. . . . Out of 162,000 penitentiary prisoners at least 100,000 were not, during their entire period of imprisonment, subjected to any conscious, organized, rehabilitative efforts of any kind. This is a serious indictment of our prison system. . . .

What can we do about it, New York's Mayor LaGuardia was asked. "I believe it's far better to remove the causes of crime than to seek to correct the results of those causes when in many cases it's too late," he answered. "I prefer to build decent housing to replace slums, rather than more jails."

And speaking further to the point, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt said:

> I have received many letters from young people who have gone to prison, who laid their difficulties to crowded homes, undernourishment, broken families, and schools that don't really give young people what they need. They are not always just wicked, they are sick and perhaps a certain sort of preventive medicine plus an economic basis of living which allows you to live decently might have kept a great many people out of prison and might have meant that we carried less of a burden in our prisons.

That has been the problem of our capitalist America for decades of crime conferences. In his book, *The Soviets,* Albert Rhys Williams tells what a socialist society does with the problem:

> But the Soviets are intent at all costs on curing criminals. Not so much on humanitarian grounds as on economic. They want every man to be a productive unit, to pull his weight in the boat. They have found that humaneness is the best way to salvage criminals, to transform defectives into effectives. In proof of this, they point out that less than 20 percent are "recidivists," or repeaters, as against twice that number in capitalist countries. They maintain too that there has been a reduction of fully one-third in the number of crimes committed. Undoubtedly this is in part due to the Soviet penal system. But it is also due to the Soviet economic system in which everyone is assured of a job. There is a place for every man in the five year plans which provides not only a task for his hands to do but a big idea that appeals to his imagination and sense of adventure.

Fame

LONDON, Oct. 17—An Associated Press dispatch to the New York *Herald Tribune* announces:

"Sir William Jackson Pope, who enabled the Allies near the close of the World War to produce mustard gas in larger quantities than the enemy died today. He was sixty-nine years old."

Mischa Richter

News Item—"One million Polish Jews flee Nazi-held Western Poland for Sovietized Ukraine and Byelo Russia."

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The Fight for Popular-Priced Books

New Masses makes an author, publisher, reader survey in cheaply priced new and reprint books. Their cost and distribution problems.

"I'M WRITING to register a protest and I think I have a right to do the same. So please listen." These fighting words introduced a letter received by NEW MASSES last year from a reader in Mexico City. Our correspondent had just read Michael Gold's review of *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens.* "I'm sold on the book and I put it on my 'must' list," he wrote. "Suddenly the price hits me between my two eyes—$10. I object, and damn it all, if Steffens were alive he'd object too. He'd want the book to get in the hands of the right people, and those are the ones who can least afford it. Yes, he'd have them printed at prices at which Joe Worker could buy them."

Could he? That is the question we asked ourselves in preparing this article. What could Lincoln Steffens do, in 1939, to get his books to the millions? For he certainly would have agreed with Joe Worker that the two thousand people (maximum) who bought the *Letters* do not take in all the "right people." The question is not easy to answer. Harcourt, Brace & Co., publishers of the Steffens book, submitted figures to us which indicate that their net profit per set was 30 cents, surely a reasonable profit. Henry Hart, on the basis of his experience with the publishing business, pointed out that "The irrationality of book publishing under capitalism has its perfect illustration in the price of the Steffens *Letters.*" For if the letters are to be read, Hart went on, the retail price must be sliced to a level commensurate with a much lower income level; at the same time, if the publishers are to stay in business, they must publish the *Letters* at $10. And Michael Gold wrote Joe Worker that "I still don't see any final answer but socialism, but one hates to wait. After all, even today it is possible to see some mighty fine movies for a quarter."

Difference of opinion naturally arises as to the solution of the problem, but nobody can ignore its existence. There is an obvious disparity between the book-buying audience in America and the total literate population. That disparity both accounts for and results from the fact that book-publishing is still, for the most part, in the horse-and-buggy era. Unlike the movies and the radio, publishing is a "little" business, beset by all the troublesome hazards, wastes, and inefficiencies of small-scale enterprise in the era of monopoly capitalism. "Something must be done!" is the classical cry of the industry. Over seventy million people pay money to see a movie every week; but if a publisher can sell an average of more than three thousand copies per volume he considers himself pretty lucky.

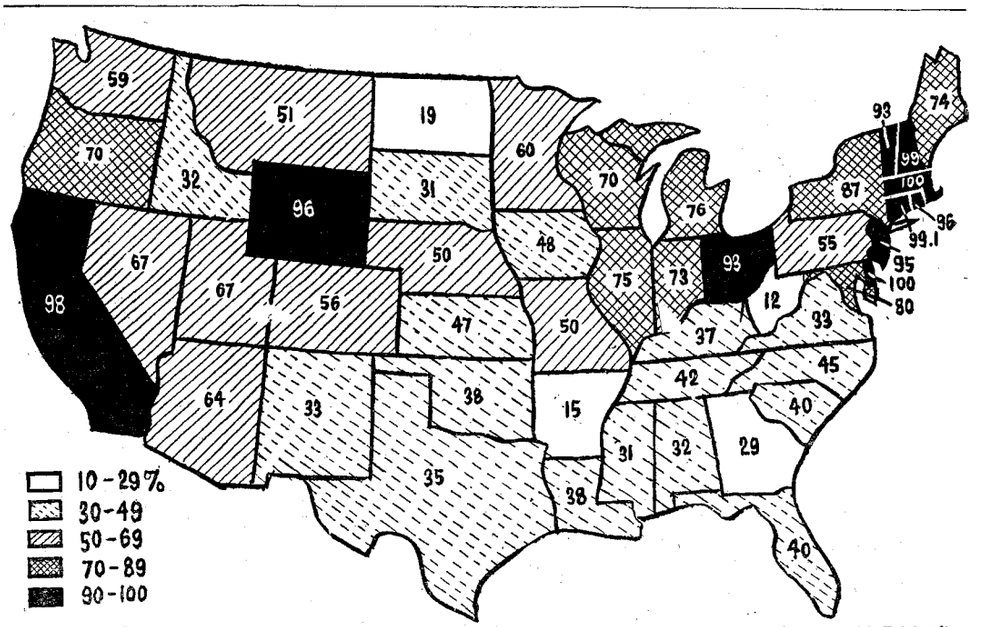
Authors are in the same boat, of course. They want to be read, or there is not much sense in writing. They have to make a living, or they must quit writing in spite of themselves.

And Joe Worker is not the only reader who feels deprived of the $10 set. Workers, professionals, middle class groups of various sorts are buying books in fantastically small quantities when you consider their numbers and interests. George Albee points out in his answer to the questionnaire that we sent to several hundred authors that the average novel sells less than one thousand copies, less than one-thousandth of 1 percent of our population. He adds: "A best-seller which reached the unheard-of sale of a million copies would still reach less than 1 percent. What a very small drop in what a very big bucket!" We have asked one thousand NEW MASSES readers how many books they would *like* to buy and how many they are *able* to buy in an average year. The figures are revealing.

Here is a problem which equally concerns publisher, author, and reader. Theoretically, their interests are far from antagonistic. The publisher wants to sell; the author wants to be read; the reader would like to buy. What, then, is the difficulty? We were not surprised to find that price is the root of the evil. But we are more concerned with an inquiry into the realistic possibilities, within the framework of the profit system, of a wider distribution of books. It is well known that in the Soviet Union it is a question of *billions* of books, as Albert Rhys Williams and other commentators have recently shown. The figures at the Soviet Pavilion are a powerful reminder that "the final solution" of the problem, as Michael Gold told Joe Worker, is socialism. Our inquiry has been limited to the immediate prospects in America. For we are profoundly convinced that the strengthening of our democracy depends in large part on a much wider distribution of good books.

QUESTIONNAIRES

We have therefore sent three sets of questionnaires to authors, publishers, and readers. While the questionnaires differed in details,



Ad Reinhardt

PUBLIC LIBRARIES. *Percentage of population of each state residing in local public library districts, 1934. Note the vast light-shaded areas. Of the 45,000,000 Americans without library service, 88 percent live in the open country or in towns of less than 2,500. This number is 74 percent of the total rural population. The 6,235 public libraries in 1935 owned 100,500,000 books that were very unevenly distributed. One-eighth of the total was contained in one state—New York. A resident of New Hampshire had thirty-five books at his disposal to every one that a resident of Arkansas or Mississippi had. The average number of volumes per capita for the United States was 0.89—less than one book for each American. It hasn't been getting better very rapidly: nine years earlier the figure was 0.62. When will we get the last chapter of that book?*

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the basic problem underlying all three was: What practical proposals can you make for widening the book audience in America? We publish the results below.

AUTHORS

Over one hundred authors responded to our questionnaire.

The replies revealed a wide range of interests which suggests the representative character of our sampling. It is not possible to list all the names. Such diverse fiction writers, for example, as Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Upton Sinclair, Thornton Wilder, Irving Fineman, Sidney Meller, George Albee, Grace Flandrau, Albert Maltz, August Derleth, Stanley Young, Hans Otto Storm, Jennie Ballou, Clifford Dowdey, Mark Schorer, Mari Sandoz, Clara Weatherwax, and William Cunningham contributed. We received replies from many writers on labor problems: Leo Huberman, John Stuart, Horace B. Davis, J. Raymond Walsh, Grace Hutchins, and others. The opinions of Max Lerner and Anna Rochester, Vida Scudder and Corliss Lamont, Genevieve Taggard and Frank Marshall Davis, Jean Starr Untermeyer and Louis Zukofsky, Victor A. Yakhontoff and V. D. Kazakevich, Cedric Belfrage and Holland D. Roberts are represented in our findings.

AUDIENCE

The first two questions, on the types and numbers of readers reached by the writer, may be grouped together:

1. *How would you describe the audience to which your books are addressed? 2. Have you any way of determining the extent to which you have succeeded in reaching this audience? What has been the average price at which your books were sold?*

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the replies to these questions is that authors are painfully aware of a wide gulf between their desired and their actual audience. The average price of the books mentioned was $2.50. Those writers whose work had appeared in editions under a dollar reported more successful sales than the others. It is interesting to note that where a writer's work was published originally at two or three dollars and then reprinted in a cheap edition, the sales on the latter far exceeded the original sales.

Thirty percent of the answers indicate that the writers had no specific audience in mind when they published their books. The other replies may be divided into five groups: labor, intelligent middle class, specialists, "escape" readers, "intellectuals." The majority of replies group labor and the intelligent middle class as the audience which the writer addresses.

The replies from poets were least hopeful: "I write for those who cannot afford to pay $2.50 for a thin book of poetry," Genevieve Taggard replies; "for those who cannot afford to pay even 50 cents. . . . Books have sold at an average of $2.50." Several writers suggest that there's many an ironic slip between intention and reality. Thus Horace B. Davis: "My books are addressed to the labor audience primarily, i.e., militant trade unionists. I understand that they are read chiefly by students and personnel managers." Bob Brown notes that his delightful cookbooks "reach an audience directly in proportion to their price. . . ."

Writers of first books are particularly bitter. They point out that a new writer cannot sell his book for $2.50 unless the publishers engage in special sales campaigns. They feel that publishers are ordinarily reluctant to spend money advertising newcomers, and that the bulk of the publisher's budget is devoted to already established writers. At the same time, the newcomer must compete with the author of reputation on the same price level.

Anna Rochester points out that "Workers' editions at $2 or less have sold more than 'trade' editions," and she is convinced that by lowering prices middle-class audiences can also be greatly increased. Other writers make the point that if readers wait long enough they can get books at prices they can afford. Original editions of $2 or more had to be remaindered; and they could only be sold out when placed on the 39-cent counters.

Not many best-selling authors are represented on our list; but we are convinced by the replies that the overwhelming majority of writers are in a state of permanent depression about the size of their actual book-buying audience. As we shall see, however, they do not take a defeatist attitude toward what is plainly a bad situation.

3. *What realistic possibilities do you envisage for that widening of the book-buying audience which we all feel will strengthen our democracy?*

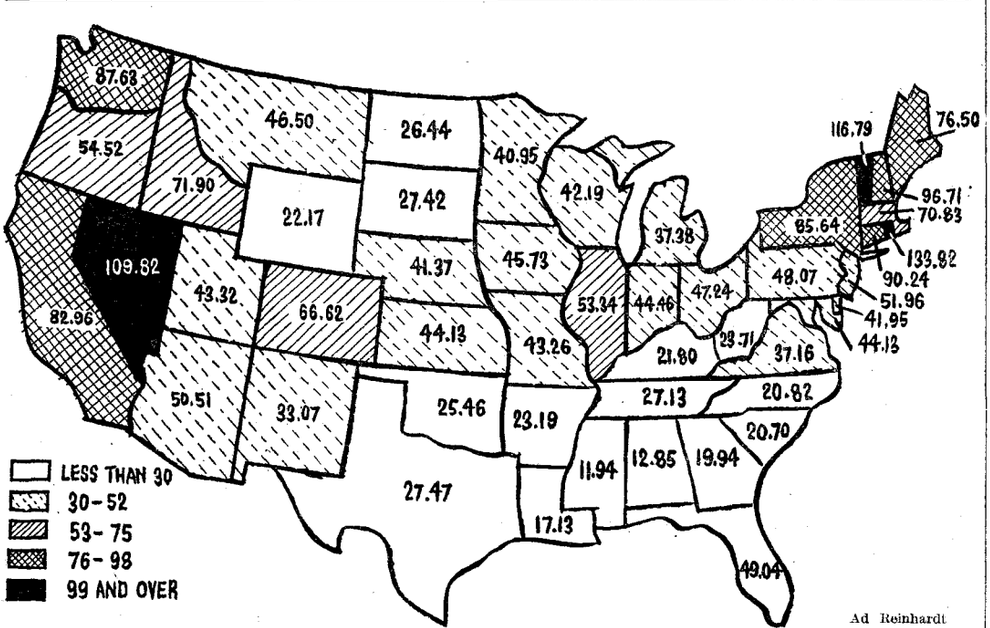
Two or three writers comment on the phrasing of this question. One author writes: "Not at all sure about correlation books/democracy. It all depends on whose books you sell. And I note that illiterate people sometimes are the hardest ones to regiment." The last sentence is highly dubious as sociology. But the caution as to the *character* of the books distributed is of course pertinent. Another puts it this way: "It all depends upon what books are sold and what public buys them. I rather agree with Jimmie Walker, who once said that he never heard of a girl having been seduced by a book. A book may help, that is true, but cannot be the decisive factor. The same does apply, I think, to the strengthening of democracy."

While the vast majority of replies show strong support for cheaper books as the best solution (see next question), a wide variety of interesting suggestions are made for additional possibilities.

The need for a redistribution of income is stressed by a number of writers. Max Lerner writes: "As I see the problem, it is a two-fold one: the people who have the money are usually not the ones who like good books; the people who like good books do not usually have the money to buy them. This involves a dual change—a change in income distribution and a change in reading habits." William Cunningham reminds writers that "to reach the masses we must raise wages and shorten the work week, extend WPA, provide old-age pensions, better houses, better schools."

The question of education is mentioned frequently. Vida Scudder combined the income and education factors: "I suppose the practical way of widening the book-buying public is to educate it to a book hunger—and ultimately to secure for everyone a decent margin of income beyond a subsistence." Irving Fineman, expressing a widespread feeling that the teaching of literature in our schools could stand improvement, urges: "replacing the dull and forbidding cramming of classics by a lively introduction to old and new fiction as a reflection of life itself." Dorothy Canfield Fisher places much hope "in the rapid growth of 'adult education.'"

Writers who live in small communities uniformly stress the need to make books *available* as a preliminary to education. Mari Sandoz writes



BOOKSTORES. *Gross number of bookstores per one million population, 1935. The wide open spaces again. There were six thousand bookstores in 1935, heavily concentrated in a few areas. About 32,000,000 people, largely in rural areas, were without bookstore service. Rhode Island had one bookstore for every 7,462 people; Mississippi, one for every 84,035. Sparse distribution of population makes operation of bookstores unprofitable. But the recently reduced postal rate for books offers one way to better the situation. Compare the maps facing each other on these pages and you'll see that the states represented with good library service are better supplied with bookstores too. On the map every bookstore has been counted as one unit, regardless of size. Remember that the Far West and Northeast not only have more bookstores, but sell more books than do the other regions.*

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from Nebraska: "In my home community, thirty miles from a railroad, with few who have gone beyond the eighth grade, I have started a bit of a library, with books varying from bird guides to philosophy, from light novels to Racine and Euripides. They are being read—some more than others, of course. But not long ago few had ever opened a book beyond the rural school texts and the Sears, Roebuck catalogues, because nothing else was available." And August Derleth, writing from Sauk City, Wis.: "I think it should be made clear that there are many sections of our nation completely without any library facilities of any kind." (Which raises a very large and decisively important question beyond the immediate scope of our survey—see chart on Page 18.)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Genevieve Taggard calls attention to the radio as a medium for broadening the poetry audience. Better advertising and distribution of books are mentioned repeatedly. A very large number of contributors dwell on the fact that magazines compete with books. Hans Otto Storm expects "the effect of price on volume to be a moderate one until the price of books gets low enough to compete with magazines, and for this competition $1.25 is still too high." Grace Flandrau knows "too many people" who "don't even *read* magazines any more, they *look* at photographic magazines."

Mr. Storm adds a postscript that will be appreciated by many: "If they could make review copies so they would wear out and not get in the second-hand stalls before publication date, that would help too." V. D. Kazakevich makes another fruitful proposal for his special field: "Most economists cannot write good English; that is the first problem. Most economists insist on being involved and unclear, which is not at all necessary. Many economists have nothing to say, but just go on writing from force of habit."

Quite a few authors raise the problem of distributing books through trade union channels. Leo Huberman, for example, suggests that "unions can do more than they are doing to get books cheaply for their members by buying them in quantity." Horace B. Davis feels that the natural market for labor books is the organized labor movement, and he observes that efforts in this direction instead of being confined to national offices of unions should be extended to trade union locals.

4. *From your point of view as an author, will you comment on the desirability of inexpensive books (average maximum of $1.25)?*

The verdict is practically unanimous. Indeed, a majority of the authors take exception to the suggested maximum of $1.25 on the ground that the estimate is too high. Dorothy Canfield Fisher would like to see cheap books "far below $1.25 in price." The young Negro poet, Frank Marshall Davis, says that no price over $1 will materially alter the present situation. Cedric Belfrage remarks that "In this country we ought to think less about tony bookstores as distribution media, and more about 5-&-10's, newsstands, and drugstores. Then we would begin to sell editions like they sell in the Soviet Union."

At least four authors comment on the fact that they could not afford to buy their own books at the price for which they are retailing. Vida Scudder says of her books, "I should never buy one of them myself, at the prices charged." And Stanley Young deplores the fact that "we ourselves, who measure our lives in books, find it necessary to go to the libraries to borrow books that we should like to own."

Authors want to be read, and they feel that inexpensive books will carry their work to more people. Albert Maltz writes that he "prays" for cheap books "every night." Stirling Bowen says, "I think desirability (of cheap books) is no longer in question. Without wanting to be rhetorical, it is a case of necessity." Thornton Wilder feels that reduced prices would double the market. Upton Sinclair comments: "Of course I would be delighted to see large editions of cheap books and I am at the service of any publishers who will try experiments."

But many writers wisely point out the element of risk which must first be eliminated. Some publishers in reducing book prices have reduced authors' royalties *out of proportion* to the price differential. The precarious living that most writers make must be guaranteed against such scalping. Another possible danger referred to by contributors is the danger of doing sloppy work; but this fear is generally set to rest by the quality of Modern Age Books, for example. Many authors, incidentally, seem to be under the impression that Modern Age has been a financial failure. One of the reasons for this impression is implicit in Max Lerner's comment: "I am all for the inexpensive book—provided it really does succeed in widening the book audience and not merely (as has been too often true thus far) in obscuring the existence of the book." The point, of course, is that cheap-edition books have been shockingly ignored by the press reviewers, despite the obviously high quality of many of these books. This problem of a book's prestige—and to that extent, sale—is a serious one for any author.

The results of the questionnaire give striking confirmation of the view that most authors are primarily concerned about reaching a wide audience, and that they consider the inexpensive book idea as an invaluable approach to this goal. Authors are solidly behind the slogan: Books for the Millions.

READERS

In order to document our impression of the reader-reaction to the question of book prices, we sent a questionnaire to a thousand readers of New Masses. Perhaps this will strike people as bolstering the obvious. Unfortunately, what is obvious to the layman is sometimes a mystery to the specialist. One publisher told us that if people are *really* interested in books, price is no obstacle. The answers to our questionnaire echo our horse laugh when we heard this remark at a publishers' luncheon recently.

1. *How many books do you buy in an average year?*

The replies vary from zero to fifty. The median figure is between five and ten.

2. *What determines your selection of these books?*

In the interest of accuracy, we are compelled to report that a plurality of first votes were cast for New Masses reviews. The other choices follow in order: Reputation of authors, other reviews, personal recommendations, and advertisements.

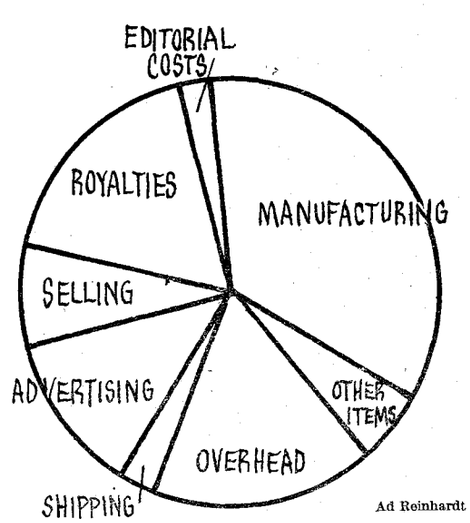
3. *What major factor or group of factors limits your purchase of books?*

An overwhelming first was the factor of *price*. The terms vary, but the meaning is the same: "cost," "money," "finances," "low income," "funds," "cash," etc. (We did not realize that there were so many ways of saying money.) Other factors mentioned in many of the letters are: time, lack of interest, and remoteness from places where books are sold.

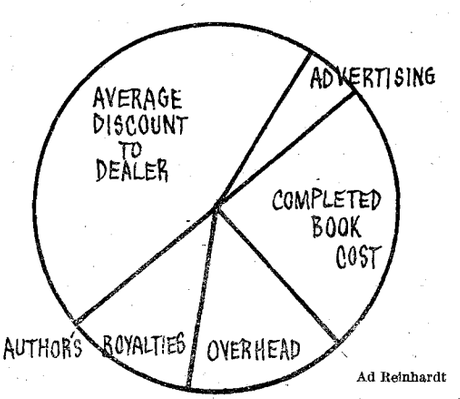
4. *What possibilities do you envisage for expanding the audience for books?*

Here again a reduction in book prices was stressed. Typical answers: "Seems to me that when a good book costs the same as a movie, a great many more people will read." "Cheap editions will mean more readers." A number of readers, commenting on inexpensive editions, pointed to the desirability of making these physically attractive. Many confirmed the findings of our chart on page 20 with respect to the bad library conditions which prevail in most sections of the country.

If any publisher is in doubt concerning the sentiment of readers for cheaper books, we invite inspection of our files. These files suggest the possibility that among our readers the unusually high median of five to ten books per year would more than double with a downward movement in book



ON A 75-CENT BOOK. *Manufacturing becomes the major cost in estimating the cost of a popular-priced original book. Shipping and selling gain a greater proportion of the total cost factors. Compare with chart opposite.*



ON A *$2.50* BOOK. *Here is how the various expenses in producing and selling an average priced book break down. The book-dealer's discount overshadows any other factor in determining the sales price. So great a stock of books must be carried and so slow are sales of $2.50 and $3 books that the considerable discount is needed to support the shopkeeper.*

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prices. We feel that it is reasonable to expect a similar increase among groups which at present buy only one or two, or perhaps none, per year.

PUBLISHERS

Will the publishers supply the capital to finance the issuance of low-cost books in volume large enough to meet the demands of a mass market? They will—if they think they can make money out of it. To date most publishers' efforts in this direction have been confined to the reprinting of well known titles for a popular market. A generation ago J. M. Dent and Thomas Nelson pointed the way to big sales with pocket-sized books and when Alexander Grosset devised the idea of popular copyrights the reprint plan became the foundation of several new houses.

Reprints became a good business bet in America when Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer took over the pocket library of the Bonis in 1925. At that time it had grown to a series of 109 titles with a total sale of 350,000 copies a year. Today their Modern Library boasts 220 titles in the regular series at 95 cents and forty-eight titles in the Giant editions at $1.25. Last year more than a million Modern Library books were sold.

Everyman's Library, issued by Dutton, and the Oxford World's Classics have secured tremendous sales in this country and abroad. Grosset extended the popular market when it put out 50-cent books for the children's counters. Doubleday brought non-fiction into the reprint field and sold widely in uniform $1 editions. Drugstores added dollar non-fiction to their 75-cent fiction reprints and even railway stands began to see a good thing in books. Prices were lowered and markets broadened when Doubleday took up the odd-penny price special spawned by the '29 crash and bulked books high in drugstore windows.

Now almost every publishing house issues its own special series of reprints. There are the Appleton-Century Dollar Library, the Houghton Mifflin Eagle Editions, Harcourt Brace's Harbrace Books, and a number of others. Although their prices vary from 75 cents to $1.50, a scale considerably below that of the $2.50 to $5 editions of new books, they cannot really be classed as cheap books within the reach of the millions. Large as their sales may be, they are still but a tiny fraction of the potential book audience.

Much progress in the inexpensive book field has been made by labor publishers. Thirty-five years ago the Chicago firm of Charles H. Kerr supplied American workers with 25- and 50-cent editions of socialist classics. These were widely sold, together with nickel and dime booklets, at trade union and left-wing political meetings. Eugene V. Debs, for example, sold thousands of copies of his writings at meetings and lectures. Literature sale has been a traditional feature of progressive forums, picnics, and conventions. Despite certain inadequacies of editing, which were inevitable at the time, Kerr's books made a profoundly important contribution to American intellectual development.

That contribution has been carried on and strengthened by International Publishers under the editorship of Alexander Trachtenberg. Next month International celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. Appealing to an extensive audience in the lower income brackets, the firm has from the outset attempted to peg prices as far down as possible. It has done outstanding work in making available to English readers all the Marxist classics. (Incidentally, as far back as 1918 the first Lenin document published in America between covers —*Soviets at Work*—was issued by Rand School under Trachtenberg's editorship. The booklet sold for 10 cents. Its numerous editions added up to a million copies.)

In addition to its regular trade editions, International sells books to workers and progressive bookshops in large quantities which permit a lower discount basis and therefore lower prices. Many of these shops sell to organizations as well as individuals. As a result the ultimate consumer in an organization can frequently purchase a $2.50 book for $1 or less. New markets have thus been created. For few workers would otherwise be able to purchase books at regular list price. In addition, some of these organizations sell books on the installment plan.

International must operate on a strictly commercial basis, of course, since it is not exempt from the usual financial burdens of any publishing enterprise. But its emphasis on mass sales has enabled it, for example, to issue Lenin's *State and Revolution* and Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* for 10 cents. Each volume has sold in editions of 100,000. In addition, a wide range of titles—including biographies, literary works, studies in American history, and so on—have sold for from 15 cents to $1.25. Albert Maltz' *The Way Things Are* sold for $1.25; *Proletarian Literature in America* sold fifteen thousand copies at $1; S. Funaroff's volume of verse, *The Spider and the Clock,* sold at 35 cents; and a number of booklets on Negro history at 15 cents.

PUBLISHING COSTS

The fact that so few commercial houses have ventured into the low-cost field shows most publishers don't believe there's gold in them thar hills. Answering the NEW MASSES inquiry, one publisher told us: "Everyone gets all the books he wants today, no matter how poor he is." And Stackpole wrote: "Our experience doesn't indicate that the production of inexpensive books can represent a gain for publisher and author."

But there are a few brave business men who look at the cheap book problem differently. Two years ago Modern Age Books plumped into the picture with a heavy investment. Its arrival was greeted with loud hoorays from book-starved readers and writers discontented with talking to intimates in editions of eight hundred. The old stalwarts in the industry tsk-tsked over the foolhardiness of the upstart. But Modern Age bucked ahead and this summer warmly greeted an-

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other aspirant in the field, Pocket Books. The newer house limits itself to reprints; Modern Age handles both these and new books. The other big factor in the attempt to make cheap books a success in America is the British firm, Penguin. A tremendous hit abroad, having sold over 25,000,000 copies since its beginning three and a half years ago, it now operates in this country, importing the English editions.

In sizing up his prospects in the inexpensive book market, a publisher considers three factors: the number of people he can count on to buy his books; the number of good authors he can get to write them; and the number of outlets he can expect to distribute them. Mass production is what makes the 25-cent and 50-cent books possible. If the price is to remain low, the publisher must feel certain that there are now or will soon be sufficient bookbuyers, authors, and outlets to warrant his investment.

Publishers' estimates of the number of potential bookbuyers run (according to their answers to our questionnaire) from 200,000 to thirty million people. Their estimates are based upon several facts. Public and rental library statistics indicate that there are from five to ten times as many people reading books as buying books, a proportion that would be increased if we could calculate the wide-scale borrowing that goes on constantly between individuals. Others cite the fact that America is one of the most literate countries in the world, and conclude that most people who can read would like to buy books. They don't because they can't afford the $2.50 which is the price of the average general book today.

Of course it is not simply a matter of economics. Lots of the people who do have money don't spend any of it on books. And if the wages of the depressed one-third of the nation were suddenly raised to a decent level, the bookstores wouldn't be immediately overrun with new customers. To make America "book-conscious" we must also have more and better schooling and libraries and increased leisure. But those are long-term factors. The immediate step to be taken is the drastic reduction of book prices to a level within the means of the great majority of the people.

That step has been taken by the Modern Age, Pocket, and Penguin houses. In its first four months Pocket has sold 700,000 books. Without exception stores have reported that the rapid turnover of Pocket's 25-cent reprints has stepped up business and brought in new customers. Modern Age, which at first speculated on new book editions of fifty and a hundred thousand, has sobered up to an average sale of twenty thousand copies for books priced at 50 cents, 75 cents, and 95 cents, the smaller editions forcing them to raise their prices. Publishing new books is a more expensive proposition than doing reprints, which are free of plate cost and bear a lower overhead and royalty expense. Penguin has made only a beginning here, but with a huge

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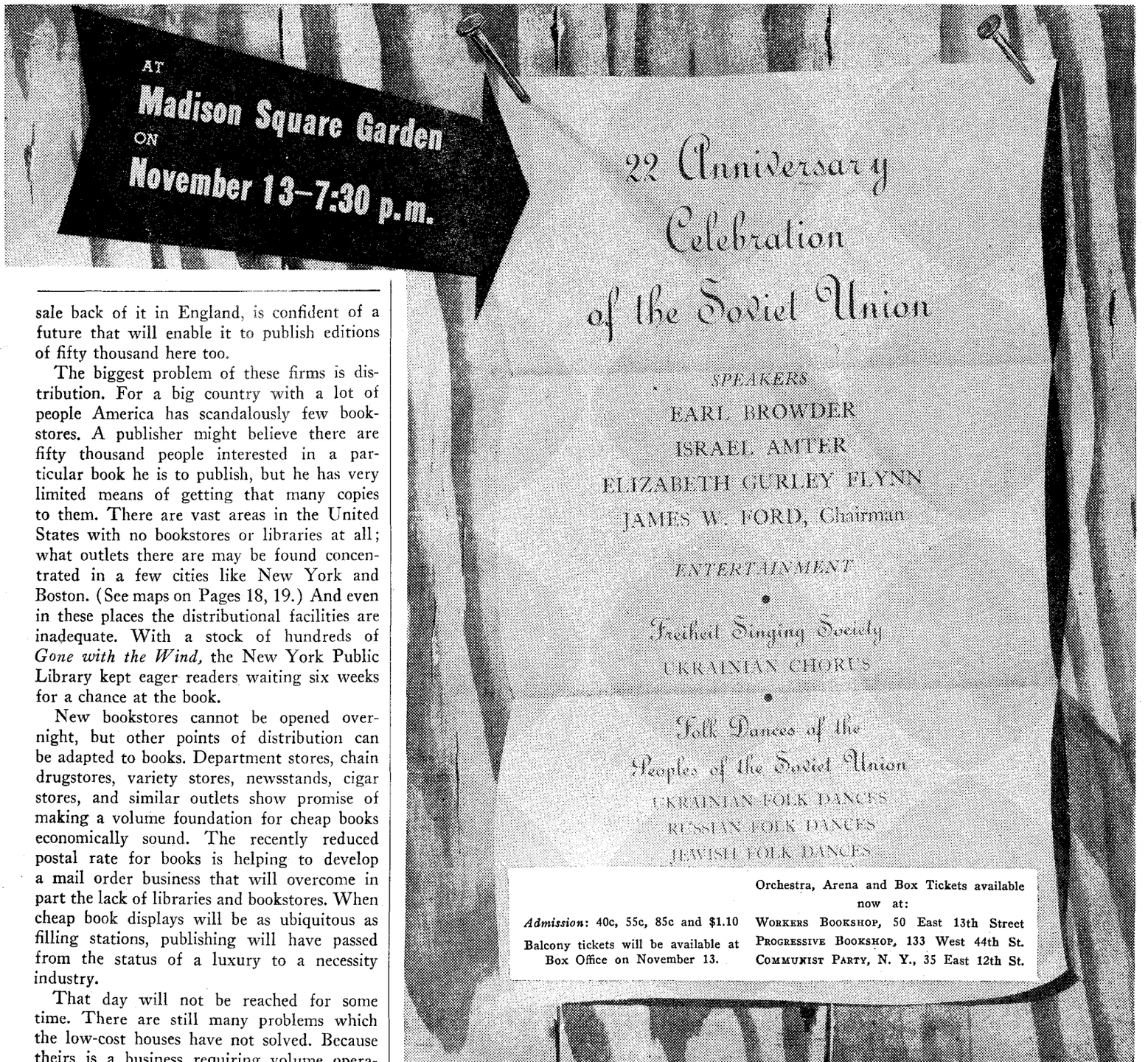

sale back of it in England, is confident of a future that will enable it to publish editions of fifty thousand here too.

The biggest problem of these firms is distribution. For a big country with a lot of people America has scandalously few bookstores. A publisher might believe there are fifty thousand people interested in a particular book he is to publish, but he has very limited means of getting that many copies to them. There are vast areas in the United States with no bookstores or libraries at all; what outlets there are may be found concentrated in a few cities like New York and Boston. (See maps on Pages 18, 19.) And even in these places the distributional facilities are inadequate. With a stock of hundreds of *Gone with the Wind,* the New York Public Library kept eager readers waiting six weeks for a chance at the book.

New bookstores cannot be opened overnight, but other points of distribution can be adapted to books. Department stores, chain drugstores, variety stores, newsstands, cigar stores, and similar outlets show promise of making a volume foundation for cheap books economically sound. The recently reduced postal rate for books is helping to develop a mail order business that will overcome in part the lack of libraries and bookstores. When cheap book displays will be as ubiquitous as filling stations, publishing will have passed from the status of a luxury to a necessity industry.

That day will not be reached for some time. There are still many problems which the low-cost houses have not solved. Because theirs is a business requiring volume operation they must have not only large editions of each title, but a sufficiently large number of titles on which overhead charges can rest and through which publicity, advertising, and promotional expense can be placed on an efficient level. That is why the firms now in the field welcome new ones. Several hundred titles a year, widely varied in reader appeal, will accustom the American public to buying low-cost books and permit the expansion and development of distributional facilities which cheap books must have. To facilitate their growth, the low-cost houses now in existence should cooperate along fundamental lines, such as the establishment of better distributional facilities, the standardization of advertising, promotional, and sales methods, and a joint effort to make the public conscious of the advantages of low-cost book buying.

The progressive movement has a lot to gain from the widening of the book audience in America. The radio, newspapers, magazines, and movies, media controlled by big business, mislead public opinion more often than they inform it. It is hard for an author of progressive views to find a publisher among those who issue expensive books for a limited audience. But when book prices are brought within reach of an audience of millions, the problem changes. The publisher must select authors whose work will appeal to these millions. The experience of low-cost book publishers shows that great numbers of people want progressive books. In England, Penguin's *Searchlight on Spain,* a book by the democratic duchess of Atholl, went rapidly through six editions of fifty thousand. In this country, Penguin's best seller has been a special book on Poland. In contrast, Penguin's sponsorship of a book by the reactionary Lord Lothian was disastrous, for it sold only eleven thousand, one of the worst records in that firm's history.

Modern Age reports that of some eighty titles on its list, sixteen books dealing with important social issues from a progressive slant have accounted for more than half of the house's total sales.

In times like these, when we are desperately in need of places where we can tell the truth about the war, the existence of a

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broad national audience accustomed to buying lowpriced books would be of great value. There is no question but that *The Grapes of Wrath* is having a definite and healthy influence on the thinking of hundreds of thousands of people. If that book were sold for 25 or 50 cents its influence would be enormously extended. To prepare the way for a progressive victory in the 1940 elections huge editions of 25-cent books by progressive leaders of public opinion would help counteract the pressure of the press and radio. Books for the millions are a weapon for democracy.

SAMUEL SILLEN and MILTON MELTZER.

"Men in Battle"

David McKelvy White reviews Alvah Bessie's new book.

This book, whose chronology covers only my own experience in Spain, and whose sentiments are purely my own, is intended to elaborate and explain (by indirection) the role that these Americans played in what is still called the "Spanish Civil War."

IN THIS way Alvah Bessie, at the beginning of *Men in Battle* (Charles Scribner's Sons, $2.50) sets his task before himself and, for judgment, before his readers. By *indirection* he presumably means that he is not using the essay form that would be implied by the words *elaborate and explain*. Actually he employs with great brilliance the most direct of methods—the method which comes the closest possible to such direct communication of experience as will make explanation superfluous.

The reader all but lives the life of a member of the Lincoln Battalion, guided by Bessie's alert and sensitive observation and by his disarmingly honest attitude toward himself and the life and death around him. In 350 pages his admirably tight conciseness thus enables him to crowd a great wealth of experience and vivid detail.

This is not to say that Bessie's method does not impose limitations. By adhering firmly to his own experience, there are of course certain aspects of warfare that he cannot know about or depict. "For," as he most correctly observes, "to the average soldier, battle always remains a chaos and an impression of immense confusion; he has only a worm's-eye view of the affair; he has no way of knowing what it's all about. One minute he is advancing under fire; the next he is lying low; the next, withdrawing. He receives definite orders and they are immediately countermanded; he rarely sees the enemy and the fire that is directed at him assumes astonishing impersonality, as though it were independent of any human agency."

Actually Bessie's first action—that at Batea at the end of March 1938—was among the most efficiently planned and executed in the history of the Fifteenth Brigade. As here experienced and described, this action is, from a military point of view, completely incoherent

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and meaningless. But this means merely that the military history of the Brigade has yet to be written.

In the same way, Bessie's position in the ranks gave him firsthand knowledge of the hardships, difficulties, and deprivations experienced by the men. He could not see or understand at firsthand the personnel and supply problems faced by higher officers and political commanders. This is of course merely a restatement of the acknowledged fact that what the reader sees is determined by Bessie's position, his character, and his background.

Bessie tells us frankly that one of his purposes in coming to Spain was to test and reshape this character, to overcome his middle class training. Such forces are not easily redirected and one is not surprised to note their effects. Bessie's objectivity throughout the book appears not to be entirely that of the observer and author. One has a feeling that he is not completely at home with the men about him. The exceptions only serve to confirm this view. One catches also a slight nervous fear of enthusiasm, a self-conscious insistence on underemphasis. This leads to a careful and sometimes just slightly supercilious air. In the light of this, one is made a little uneasy by the way in which he greets a fellow writer: "I felt better to have another writer on the spot. Writers will understand just what I mean."

No serious distortion arises from all this, however. The reader may make his own adjustments in the light of this predetermined point of view, being assured of Bessie's essential honesty, careful observation, and general good judgment.

And, be it said to Alvah Bessie's great credit as a man and his salvation as a writer, he never pretends. He never attempts to make a hero of himself. He knows fear and says so. He wants to leave the front lines, though he does not do so until after extended and creditable service. And when he is finally moved from the lines to the Brigade Commissariat, he does not invent fancy regrets. On the other hand, the book is quite without false modesty. Bessie does not like the punishment of frontline fire any more than the next man, but he can take it and does and says so.

He is honest, too, in the sampling of the men he describes. These men are good, bad, and indifferent, exactly as he encountered them and observed their behavior. To the cowards and weaklings he grants generally the cloak of an admittedly false name. Doubtless he now wishes he had given "John Henry" his real name, Henry Thomas, seeing that this unhappy individual has since then added Trotskyist disruption in America to his cowardice in Spain. In a few other cases false names rather than real ones should have been given. The very fact that Bessie's estimate of character is generally so acute and sound gives the force of judgment to observations on two or three men encountered casually and perhaps not on representative occasions. Injury and injustice are risked, with nothing to be gained.

Of Bessie's mastery of his craft of communication there can be no question, but only the highest praise. Examples clamor for mention. There is the most moving way in which, throughout the book, he relates the unreality of war to the reality of everyday life through the Spanish children who were a part of Brigade life in training, at rest, and in the towns, and through his sharp and ever recurrent memory of his own two children far away in Brooklyn. One is struck by his keenly accurate ear and faithful setting down of the speech of the men, in terror, in anger, and in jest; the emotional range of the book, with its sense of beauty and horror, physical elation and exhaustion; the deep shame of men stripped of the last vestige of pride, dignity, and manhood; the almost Homeric sketch of Valledor and John Gates at Brigade Headquarters. And there is the overpowering climax forced by events, despite Bessie's determined refusal to point up and dramatize the movement of his book, on the Sierra Pandols where the battalion clung to the rock through a hell of punishment, until the fascists, met still by grenades, withdrew and "our morale rose visibly—and audibly. Archie had the men singing 'The Star-Spangled Banner' in the lines, and the barrage began again."

There is scarcely a wasted word. In one or two sentences, sometimes with a phrase, Bessie can grasp a scene, a character, or a situation. The men are caught in motion, a sentence here, a few words of speech there, rarely in detail or sketched at full length. Milt Wolff with his cape and mustaches, Ed Rolfe with his quick bird-like features, Luke Hinman with broken nose and firm lips, Nat Gross the loyal beefer, Lennie Lamb and his charmed life, Nick Kurculiotis with blue satin quilt and regal air, Pavlos Fortis, company commander with a box of ammo, Aaron Lopoff built bit by bit into (saving Bessie himself) the book's central figure, devoted, quiet, negligently heroic. No laboring of details, no insistence. Yet the men of the Lincoln Battalion move alive through these pages.

Every man who returned from service in Spain has been asked again and again, "What was it like? Tell me, what was it *really* like?" Few of them can speak with the color and warmth and vividness of this book. They will add to and modify these pages, which will not satisfy all of them or perhaps any of them completely.

Yet the Brigade now has a book which, within its framework, is worthy of the Brigade—a book which smashes plaster heroes and builds men in battle. It shows the complexity of the problems and difficulties the men faced in Spain, the hardships they withstood, the fire they went through, the men they thus proved themselves to be. It portrays men in the variety of their individual lives, yet united, "brothers in the only sense in which the word has meaning . . . comrade was the word they used . . . You knew they were together."

And they *were* together, in a sense that was impossible in the World War where the enemy was war itself, not the forces across no-man's land which the soldier found daily

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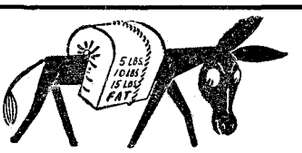

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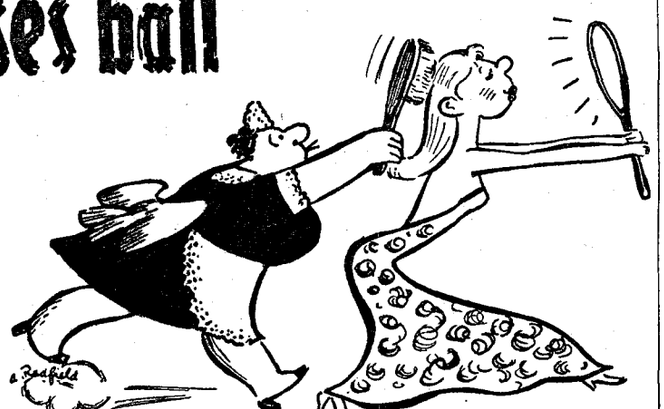

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less and less reason for hating. Comradeship in Flanders, to the sensitive and intelligent soldier, lay only in common misery and horror and was a negative thing. It could not be the welding, driving force that sends men singing to battle against an evil power, united in struggle for social liberation and freedom.

For the same reasons, no fine book can come out of the present European war as it is now being carried on: the blind fighting the blind for a strip of sunlight. Only in imperialist wars is it possible to write private memoirs. Wars of liberation, in China as in Spain, produce books that are at once the story of an individual and the story of an army, because the two cannot be separate or conflicting. Such a book is Alvah Bessie's.

Men in Battle, like the men themselves, belongs to the American people. The American people, looking at this record, will ponder their contribution to a great and noble cause, will count their losses, and see the security thus stored up toward the freedom of America and the world. For, as Alvah Bessie says in closing his book:

. . . the example of Madrid has not been lost upon the world, and every advance of fascism, every attempt to extend the "logic" of fascism, must and will be met by the increasing and ultimately overpowering determination to resist of all men of good will. For the "logic" will work again—and the growing discontent of the decent people of this world will be diverted, suppressed, killed—until these people, who have nothing to gain (and everything to lose) by the retention by violence of our present way of life, rise in their majesty and power, destroy their parasites, and reaffirm the beauty and the dignity of human life.

DAVID MCKELVY WHITE.

French Politics

FRANCE AND MUNICH, *by Alexander Werth. Harper & Bros. $3.50.*

THE Paris correspondent of the Manchester *Guardian* and the New York *Nation* has assembled the sequence of his own and other dispatches during the year 1938, and bound them into a captivating account of French politics: the chronicle of frustration, beginning with the invasion of Austria, closing with the collapse of the Munich lie in March of this year. It is a very readable tale, however ominous it must be for the French. The whole politics of the "Left" is here: the steady retreat before British connivance with Germany, the breakup of French continental security, the sabotage of relations with the USSR, the cancer of "Bonnetisme," the newspapers, the deputies, the wags, the lame and the blind. But there is a beautiful chapter on Spain before Daladier closed the frontier tight on June 13, 1938—and brilliant reportage on King George's and Queen Elizabeth's visit to Paris (Spain was being strangled and Runciman assigned to throttle the Czechs). Without sweeping generalization or profound analysis, the whole story unfolds, the effect mounts, the judgment is inescapable. J. S.

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SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Mr. Capra Comes Back

Frank Capra, Sidney Buchman, and a prize cast deliver one of the best American films of the year in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" . . . Hello, Rasputin, goodby.

FRANK CAPRA'S new picture is as good as *You Can't Take It with You* was bad. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* at the Music Hall (N. Y.) is a positive democratic picture with the highest entertainment quality any American film has had in years. Mr. Capra, with the inspired typewriter of Sidney Buchman, is back again with his Little Man in a cockeyed world, the world in which the little man's values seem to count for nothing. Simple Jefferson Smith, winningly played by James Stewart, is an idealistic Boy Ranger leader from a prairie state who accidentally wins a senatorial appointment when a grafting senator dies. Jefferson doesn't know about the boodle ring that runs the state and that hopes to keep him in line because of his dumbness.

Mr. Smith goes to Washington and Mr. Capra proceeds for two hours with an enchanting essay on Washington life and the education of Jefferson Smith in the ways of politics. Poor Jefferson is agape at the nation's capital; he gets on a sightseeing bus on his first afternoon in town, thrilled to the soles of his big feet by the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, the Capitol dome. Jefferson believes in the democracy of his namesake and Honest Abe; he is stricken dumb when he first enters the Senate Chamber and takes the desk where Daniel Webster once sat.

Soon Jefferson feels he ought to introduce a bill and the unscrupulous senior senator encourages him to draw up a bill for a national boys' camp, thinking this will keep the punk out of trouble. But it leads to the discovery by Jeff that he is the victim of the Jim Taylor gang. He threatens to expose Taylor in the Senate and is ruthlessly framed by the gang and threatened with loss of his seat. Jeff begins a filibuster which goes on until he wins.

I came into the picture in the midst of the filibuster. When the senior senator (Claude Rains) can stand the frameup no longer he turns on the gang and clears the boy. I thought this utterly preposterous—an old rogue refusing to go through a simple little thing like a frameup. I did not reckon with Mr. Buchman's well built script. After the first part of the picture came around I discovered plant after plant to establish Rains' reluctance in the frameup. When the act finally comes it has been thoroughly prepared.

The boss of the graft ring, Jim Taylor, is a big newspaper publisher, if you please. The picture shows candidly how he controls the press and smashes the opposition, which consists of nothing but Jeff's Boy Rangers and their hand press. The picture exposes the Coughlin technique of inspiring "protest" telegrams to Washington, when the press lord floods the chamber with gag telegrams during Jeff's filibuster. It is a very realistic picture.

The main value of the film is its vigorous affirmation of the Bill of Rights. Although filibusters have had their biggest use by reactionaries, Jeff's filibuster is a fight for justice. The sequence is beautifully handled, with Jean Arthur, Jeff's secretary, instructing him from the gallery to read the Constitution, the Bible, and other helpful texts.

Basically, the story is the Mr. Deeds formula, the simple, well meaning young man suddenly given great power; the wise girl who debunks him and bucks him up for the fight; the frameup and the young man clearing himself with a speech. Not an immortal theme, but exciting enough when compared with the usual movie fare.

The production values of the film are superb. The Senate Chamber set is marvelous facsimile and some Washington background shots have been made into fine montage by Slavko Vorkapitch. The camera work of Joseph Walker has many fine and original points, such as the half-lighted scene between Smith and his secretary in the corridors of the Lincoln Memorial.

The casting is equally good: who but Edward Arnold could do the boss, Jim Taylor? And who but Jean Arthur could play the girl? James Stewart's playing shows the guidance of a consummate director, the man who could enlarge his embarrassed twang into many other effects. Thomas Mitchell does a disorderly newspaperman with an excellent comedy sense.

Capra is the master of the folksy touch, the thing that can be so gruesomely wrong in such pictures as *Our Leading Citizen*. Again and again his homely incidents hit the audience where they live. Shy Mr. Smith underlines a conversation with a beautiful female by nervously playing with his hat, dropping it, and retrieving it. The camera works out closeups of the hat and we never see his face. Another incident shows a nervous Boy Ranger rattling off a set speech of congratulation at a Senator Smith banquet. The kid can't pronounce the words. When he returns to his comrades two of them shake their fists under his nose and shove him in pantomime; you, dummy, you, you spoiled everything.

Mr. Buchman's dialogue is excellent Capra stuff: in fact, I think he may as well keep Robert Riskin's shoes. You'd better go see this picture; there'll be a place in line right back of me.

BIG NEWS FOR LOCAL CZARISTS

History has not yet told us whether Chamberlain has a Rasputin, so that the appetites

A FLOOD OF FAKED TELEGRAMS *are shown to the junior senator, James Stewart, by the corrupt senior senator, Claude Rains, in Columbia's "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington."*

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of those who seek to explain great upheavals in terms of one or two persons are being satisfied by a dull recapitulation of the life of the czarina's confessor in a new French film with Harry Baur, installed at the Fifty-fifth Street Playhouse (N. Y.). Dramatic liberties are so prevalent in *Rasputin* that one has constantly to be reminded that the picture is actually about historical characters. Mr. Baur's monk is really a genial fellow, bit of a mystic and a great one for larking about with the girls. He and Nicholas II have a tough time of it, trying to keep out of the war and provide for their children. Finally some hotheaded officers pistol the kindly cleric and he dies remonstrating with them that the czar is going to get it too. Sure enough, the well-meaning czar gets his and then Bl-l-loody R-r-revolution. There are no disgruntled revolutionists in the picture, but the moral is plain. They shouldn't have done it.

JAMES DUGAN.

The Golden Gate

Swing bands in Harlem and in Greenwich Village.

HARLEM has a new swing palace, the Golden Gate, at 142nd and Lenox, where Teddy Wilson's new band and Andy Kirk's Kansas City Orchestra completely demolish the latest wrinkle in schmalz jazz, Buddy Wagner's Electro Swing Orchestra. This is that fearsome and long-dreaded mechanical orchestra, with the instruments hitched up to electric amplifying devices, controlled by the mad genius director from a panelful of gadgets. Under things I never dreamed of I put the sight of Mr. Wagner jittering around like Cab Calloway and keeping one hand on the knobs in order to knock out the saxophones and swell the violins. I fear one of these unexplored knobs will turn out to be the button to a canal lock or a wind machine, and visit vengeance on Mr. Wagner's music.

Wilson's band is big and slick and features Teddy's suave piano, but also Teddy as a baton weaver. This doesn't make the music any better but is one of the trials Negro musicians must undergo in order to make a decent living. Mr. Wilson at the piano with his collar off is music enough for me. Kirk's band is less pretentious and full of Kansas City jump. Mary Lou Williams, the extraordinary Negro pianist, continues to play with depth and versatility at the Kirk keyboard.

The room is enormous and pleasantly decorated, and for all I know, Toscanini and the Milan State Opera Orchestra may be playing in one of the distant corners. Prices are low, as are the possibilities for debauchery, for the place serves only ice cream goodies, pop, sandwiches, and beer.

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ALFRED GOLDSTEIN, popular political analyst, discusses the week's news, Sunday, October 29, 8:30 P.M. Auspices Workers School, 35 East 12 Street, second floor. Admission 20 cents.

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Sullivan's Chicago band and Joe Marsala's New York band. Don't be disturbed by the geography because only one man in each group is from New York. Billie Holiday is back and she must be heard with Joe Sullivan playing the accompaniment—as right a team as any of the experts ever figured out on paper. Joe's health is precarious but the job is not too exacting and he can hardly be seen for the rapt alligators bent over his big hands. Move over, fellas. His instrumentation is good—one of each in piano, drums, bass, sax, trombone, trumpet, and clarinet. The band is well rehearsed but later in the evening they forget the arrangements and you can hear them building the informal Chicago harmonics.

Marsala's outfit plays a lot of jive music, which means a not too discriminate type of jamming. But Joe's own clarinet continues to be interesting and expressive and the band untouched by sentimental considerations. Jack Gilford, who runs close second to S. J. Perelman as the greatest philosopher alive in the world today, is now in his tenth triumphant month as master of ceremonies. Jack has had so many rave notices to the effect that some day he will be discovered by the movies that he has had them photostated and sent to various producers with the suggestion, "Please Discover!"

BARNABY HOTCHKISS.

New Play

"Ladies and Gentlemen" a dull piece of melodrama.

THOSE aging playboys, Hecht and MacArthur, have another hit on their hands, in *Ladies and Gentlemen,* at the Martin Beck (N. Y.), though it is less deserved than any others they have had. Their own trivial inspiration flagging for the moment, they have transmuted a Hungarian drama by one L. Bus-Fekete into a dull, stupid, and less than routine melodrama of love, life, and death in the jury room of a Los Angeles courthouse.

Here Miss Helen Hayes, disguised as a secretary, through the force of her winning personality swings a job-lot assortment of male and female jurors over to a verdict of not-guilty for a man who is alleged to have pushed his wife off a cliff. Her toughest job was with the foreman, cadaverous Philip Merivale, but this she accomplishes by the all-pervasive power of Love.

I yield to no one in my dislike for Helen Hayes as an actress; it is true that she has a certain sophomore-class charm and earnestness, but she has neither the temperament nor the technique of a superior performer. The Broadway critics to the contrary notwithstanding, you are likely to find her less than satisfactory in an exhibition of playwrighting that is gagged-up but far from merry, slow without being powerful, cheap but not even gawdy.

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